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Poetic Experiments
and Trans-national Exchange:
The Little Magazines *Migrant* (1959-1960) and
Poor.Old.Tired.Horse. (1962-1967)

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Thesis Abstract

Migrant (1959-1960) and *Poor.Old.Tired.Horse* (1962-1967) were two little magazines edited respectively by British poets Gael Turnbull and Ian Hamilton Finlay. This thesis aims to explore the magazines' contributions to the diversification of British poetry in the 1960s, via their commitment to trans-national exchange and publication of innovative poetries. My investigation is grounded on the premise that little magazines, as important but neglected socio-literary forms, provide a nuanced picture of literary history by revealing the shifting activities and associations between groups of writers and publishers. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu and Pascale Casanova, I argue that *Migrant* and *Poor.Old.Tired.Horse* were exceptionally outward-looking publications bringing various kinds of poetic forms, both historical and contemporary, local and international, to new audiences, and creating literary networks in the process. A brief overview of the post-war British poetry scene up until 1967, and the role of little magazines within this period, will contextualize Turnbull's and Finlay's activities as editors and publishers. *Migrant* is examined as a documentation of Turnbull's early years as a poet-publisher in Britain, Canada, and the US. I argue that Turnbull's magazine is at once a manifestation of the literary friendships he forged, a negotiation of American poetic theories, and a formulation of a new British-American literary network. Identifying Charles Olson's 'Projective Verse' manifesto as a particular influence on Turnbull, I examine aspects of Olson's conceptualization of poetry as a dynamic process of unfolding in the content and ethos of *Migrant*. Finlay's attitudes to internationalism and use of vernacular speech in poetry are compared to those of Hugh MacDiarmid to demonstrate that *Poor.Old.Tired.Horse* emerged out of both a rejection and engagement with an older generation of Scottish writers. The content and organisation of the magazine, I argue, bear Finlay's consideration of art as play. Drawing on Ludwig Wittgenstein's positing of language as games, I examine the magazine as a series of playful procedures where a variety of formal experimentations were enacted.

**I verify that I composed this thesis which consists of my own work.
It has not been submitted for any other degree or qualification.**

Lila Matsumoto

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Introduction

Migrant (1959-1960) and *Poor.Old.Tired.Horse.*¹ (1962-1967) were two little magazines² edited respectively by Scottish poets Gael Turnbull and Ian Hamilton Finlay. This thesis, situating its strategies of literary and cultural analysis within the methodologies of periodical studies, explores the ways in which these two little magazines enabled the development and circulation of diverse poetic practises. Advances in printing technology in the late 1950s and early 1960s allowed editors and small press operators to take full control of literary production with comparatively little monetary investment, and to print and disseminate work lying outside the interests of more established or well-known publishing channels. Both Turnbull and Finlay, I argue, engaged with the form of the little magazine to challenge tendencies of the British literary milieu during that period. In making visible alternative literary approaches and forms, in particular those from outside Britain, and in acting as transmitters of contemporary poetic activity, *Migrant* and *POTH* encouraged the formulation of new poetic approaches in Britain in the 1960s.

The value of the little magazine in disclosing the development of literary movements is recognised by David Miller and Richard Price, who write in *British Poetry Magazines 1914-2000* that little magazines ‘represent the ongoing, contemporary presentation and dissemination of the most innovative and exploratory writing of the day’.³ While it is doubtful as to whether all little

¹ hitherto referred to as *POTH*

² According to Frederick Hoffman, Charles Allen, and Carolyn Ulrike (*The Little Magazine: A History and a Bibliography* (1946)), the term ‘little magazines’ came to be widely used during World War II. They write: ‘What [‘little’] designated above everything else was a limited group of intelligent readers: to be such a reader one had to understand the aims of the particular schools of literature that the magazines represented’. For David Miller and Richard Price, the ‘little’-ness of the little magazine relates to its low print run for each issue; they concede, however, that ‘it can be difficult to say where a little magazine stops and a more commercial literary journal starts’, not least because circulation figures are difficult or impossible to determine for either kind of publication. Due to the amorphousness and even arbitrariness of the term ‘little magazine’, the classification must be negotiated on an individual publication basis. Generally speaking, however, ‘little magazine’ in this thesis relates specifically to poetry-related publications. The ‘little’-ness of *Migrant* and *POTH*. will be explored in the main body of the thesis.

Frederick J. Hoffman, Charles Allen, and Carolyn Ulrich, *The Little Magazine: A History and Bibliography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946), p. 3.

David Miller and Richard Price, *British Poetry Magazines 1914-2000: A History and Bibliography of Little Magazines* (London: British Library and Oak Knoll, 2006), p. 9.

³ David Miller and Richard Price, p. xiii.

magazines succeed or indeed even hold aspirations in publishing ground-breaking literature, Miller and Price here illuminate an important aspect of magazines: little or not, they offer unique and contemporary insights into the literary work of a period and place. Conceptually situated between the newspaper and the bound book, magazines offer readers views of the literary, political, and social environment in the process of formulation, crystallization, and negotiation. In this way, little magazines as *Migrant* and *POTH*, beyond offering the reader individual poems, can be explored as spaces onto which artistic movements, publication patterns, literary alliances, and recurring aesthetic and/or ideological concerns of the period may be mapped.

Sean Latham and Robert Scholes's 2006 article 'The Rise of Periodical Studies' marks the broad recognition of a new area of study within the humanities. Latham and Scholes cite the development of digital media and interdisciplinary research as two key features of the emergent field of periodical study:

The rapid expansion of new media technologies [...] has begun to transform the way we view, handle, and gain access to [periodicals]. This immediacy, in turn, reveals these objects to us anew, so that we have begun to see them not as resources to be disaggregated into their individual components but as texts requiring new methodologies and new types of collaborative investigation.⁴

Digital archiving and information exchange networks via the internet has played a significant role in the wider recognition of periodicals as not 'merely containers of discrete bits of information [or] autonomous objects of study'⁵, but what Miller and Price identify – regarding little magazines specifically – as 'key node[s] in any literary infrastructure'.⁶ Resources which had hitherto been difficult to access are now available as digital editions on the internet, allowing

⁴ Sean Latham and Robert Scholes, 'The Rise of Periodical Studies', *PMLA* 121 (March 2006), 517-31 (p. 518).

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 517-518.

⁶ Miller and Price, p. xii. This thesis, as a case in point, has benefited from the online digital archives at UBU web (<http://ubu.com/>), which has made all issues of the rare *POTH* available in digital format. More crucially perhaps, UBU web, as an open source for avant-garde material, contains not only primary sources but secondary sources which allow the user to view such little magazines as *POTH* within a rich (and complex) social and historical context.

researchers to discover new or related periodical materials and to contextualize them within broader issues and developments in literature, and culture more generally.⁷ One can therefore consider the discipline of periodical studies as having both focus and scope: on one hand, individual magazines may be examined for the wealth of information they provide within its pages (literary, visually, sociologically, etc.); on the other hand, several or all issues of the magazine, or even a group of magazines from the same period or location, can be considered as a dynamic interface to culture, i.e. what that magazine can inform us about the social/political climate in which they are situated.

Awareness of the potentialities of periodicals in illuminating literary and cultural history predates the recent and rapid growth of media technologies. In 1930 Ezra Pound notably observed in his essay ‘Small Magazines’⁸ in *The English Journal*: ‘The history of contemporary letters has, to a very manifest extent, been written in [small] magazines. The commercial magazines have been content and are still more than content to take derivative products ten or twenty years after the germ has appeared in the free [small] magazines’.⁹ Pound’s statement is useful to us because it articulates the connection between little magazines and *innovative* literary aspirations and practices, a concept which lies at the heart of this thesis. Remarking upon what he sees as the complacent unoriginality of ‘commercial magazines,’ Pound suggests that little magazines’ disinterest in economic gain and/or widespread appeal fosters true artistic innovation to happen within its pages and in turn influence and shape the literary landscape at large. The position of the little magazine vis-à-vis history of literary experimentation is addressed in what is widely considered the first intensive book-length study on little magazines, *The Little Magazine: A History and a Bibliography* (1946) by Frederick Hoffman, Charles Allen, and Carolyn Ulrich.¹⁰

⁷ A good example of this is The Modernist Journal Project (<http://www.modjournal.org/>). Launched in 1995 as a collaborative project between Brown University and the University of Tulsa, the database holds not only digitalized periodicals associated with modernism, but provides study guides and digital production of books relating to modernist magazines from 1904 to 1922.

⁸ Pound’s term ‘small magazine’ can be considered as the approximate equivalent to ‘little magazine’ in this thesis.

⁹ Ezra Pound, ‘Small Magazines’, *The English Journal* Vol. 19, no. 9 (November 1930), 689-704 (p. 702).

¹⁰ Latham and Scholes note that Hoffman, Allen, and Ulrich’s study marked the beginning of scholarly investigation of little magazines as a discrete form of periodical in the US. They also assert that ‘periodical studies’ as such was launched in the US a decade before Hoffman et al.’s

Focusing on little magazines published between the late 19th century and the mid-20th century, the editors identify the predominant features of the little magazine as

[R]ebellion against traditional modes of expression and the wish to experiment with novel (and sometimes unintelligible) forms; and a desire to overcome the commercial or material difficulties which are caused by the introduction of any writing whose commercial merits have not been proved.¹¹

Hoffman et al. cite ‘accommodation’ as a key feature of little magazines. The tendency of little magazines to publish a variety of forms and styles can be contrasted to the policies of more commercial periodicals. Poetry written in unconventional ways, or addressing unconventional topics, for example, may be overlooked or refused by larger or more well-known publishers in that they pose a risk in affronting their readership or sponsors.¹² Hoffman et al. postulate that for many writers whose work appears in little magazines, the positioning of the little magazine against profit-seeking publications go hand-in-hand with the proclivity for formal experimentation in their own work. Therefore in theory, the little magazine, in claiming disinterestedness from the marketplace, is more likely than its more commercial counterparts to foster innovative literary undertakings. Hoffman et al. write: ‘Impulsiveness in aesthetic matters may not be the best motive for producing works of lasting value, but its accumulative result is an extremely honest, naïve, and audacious representation of a many-sided and tumultuous period’.¹³

In addition to identifying the little magazine as a generative form for innovative literature, Pound in his essay calls attention to the little magazine as a

publication, with Frank Luther Mott’s serialized publications on large-circulation American magazines in 1939. (Latham and Scholes, p. 519.)

¹¹ Hoffman, et al., p. 4.

¹² A.T. Tolley suggests that ‘the incentive to contribute [to literary magazines] for most writers must have been prestige’, but also that this prestige was often determined by whether the magazine paid its contributors: ‘The existence of a few that paid must have been significant in attracting professional writers’.

A.T. Tolley, *British Literary Periodicals of World War II & Aftermath: A Critical History* (Kemptville, Ontario: The Golden Dog Press, 2007), p. 195 and p. 196.

¹³ Hoffman, et al., p. 229.

site for social relations, writing that ‘Where there is not the binding force or some kind of agreement, however vague or unanalysed, between three or four writers, it seems improbable that the need of a periodical really exists. Everyone concerned would probably be happier in publishing individual volumes’.¹⁴ This recognition of little magazines as not discrete objects but as nodes of sociality is an integral aspect of periodical studies, and is a key methodology used in my investigation of *Migrant* and *POTH*. As Latham and Scholes posit, periodicals are documentations of social and political events and processes as well as developments in literature.¹⁵ The sociality which the little magazine reflects will be considered in two forms. The first is suggested by Richard Price when he reflects on the ways in which little magazines demonstrate social networks and acts of friendship amongst poets. He writes: ‘Apparent concentration on the actual text, repeated as a goal of reading lab isolated appreciation by avant-garde and conservative alike (though not of course all), is in this view an important but far from solitary pattern of behaviour within a much more complicated series of poetry-related activities which together, and often only together, constitute ‘poetry’.¹⁶ Another way in which magazines record or chart social relations is suggested by Peter Middleton, who writes that the positioning of a poem within a textual ‘community’ of other writing and commentaries possibly initiates new reading strategies:

Magazines offer the nearest thing to a public sphere for poems by providing a discursive and sometimes visual environment that enables the poems to generate a conversation among themselves and with other poetries, and in doing so to address the wider public culture. It is also in these magazines that readers are trained to read new poetry by learning the values and interpretations offered in prose commentaries and reviews as well as the juxtaposition of poems in illuminating clusters.¹⁷

¹⁴ Pound, p. 703.

¹⁵ Latham and Scholes, p. 520.

¹⁶ Richard Price, “‘To Shake the Torpid Pool’: poets’ pamphlets and the role of little magazines”, *PS 6* [Prose Supplement to *Painted, Spoken*] (2009), 15-23 (p. 16).

¹⁷ Peter Middleton, ‘Poetry after 1970’, *The Cambridge History of Twentieth Century English Literature*, ed. by Laura Marcus and Peter Nicholls (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.768-786 (p. 771).

Little magazines as repositories of hitherto unacknowledged literary histories – which in turn give new critical insights into a period – have been notably investigated in the field of modernist magazines studies.¹⁸ Recent examples include *Transatlantic Avant-Gardes: Little Magazines and Localist Modernism* (2013) by Eric White and the three-volume *Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines* (2009-2013), edited by Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker.¹⁹ The focus of Brooker's and Thacker's anthology is to trace the evolution of literary and cultural modernism: in setting modernism as the point of convergence for the little magazines studied, the particular histories, strategies, and biographies behind them are instated as formerly neglected but nevertheless vital aspects of modernist study.

This thesis hopes to redress the balance of little magazine scholarship by shifting the focus away from the modernist period. Post-war little magazine activity has received some critical attention, though hardly to the extent of modernist magazines,²⁰ and generally discussed within the framework of country-based production. Wolfgang Görtzschacher's *Little Magazine Profiles: The Little Magazines in Great Britain, 1939-1993* (1993) provides a useful overview of post-war little magazine activity in Britain through a series of essays on the phenomenology of little magazines, supplemented with interviews with select editors and in-depth profiles of nineteen magazines. The anthology *Little*

¹⁸ Suzanne W. Churchill in *The Little Magazine 'Others' and the Renovation of American Poetry: Modernism's Others* (2006) asserts that the little magazine must be read as a social framework where individual poems are situated, by the reader, within a broader fabric of contemporary discourses. Similarly, David Peters Corbett and Andrew Thacker, utilising Raymond Williams's theoretical concept of cultural formations in discussing the two modernist magazines *The Dial* and *Blast*, posit that works within little magazines exhibit 'cultural evidence' of the homology across an association of individual poets. They write: '*The Dial* makes concrete the social and cultural circumstances to which it is related, not as an illustration of the operation of cause and effect, but in a *relationship* which sees common issues manifested across a wide and 'uneven' range of discourses'.

Suzanne W. Churchill, *The Little Magazine 'Others' and the Renovation of American Poetry: Modernism's Others* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 9-10.

David Peter Corbett and Andrew Thacker, 'Raymond Williams and Cultural Formations: Movements and Magazines', *Prose Studies* 16, no. 2 (August 1993), 84-107 (p. 103).

¹⁹ The latter publication's time remit of 1880-1960 is ostensibly dictated by the life span of the magazines covered than being a prescriptive statement regarding the end-date of modernist 'influence'.

²⁰ Interestingly, critical study of post-war magazines, as well as histories of innovative British poetries post-war more generally, have largely been ignored by university and academic presses.

Magazines in America: A Modern Documentary History (1978), edited by Elliott Anderson and Mary Kinzie and focusing on mid-century magazines in America, similarly contains essays, comprehensive profiles, and interviews with little magazine editors and contributors which illuminate the ways in which editors and writers have conceptualized their role within both literary production and the social milieu. The output of Görtzschacher, Anderson, and Kinzie are notable in their attention to little magazines as cultural arbiters: Tom Montag for example in an essay in Anderson's and Kinzie's anthology notes that little magazines are print manifestations of a 'community of concerns' and as such reveal 'multifarious literary interrelationships' which have hitherto been underappreciated.²¹ David Miller and Richard Price's *British Poetry Magazines 1914-2000: A History and Bibliography of 'Little Magazines'* (2006), noted earlier, is a comprehensive catalogue of British little magazines in the 20th century, and contain insightful essays noting key trends and publication patterns.²² There is a general lack in publication, however, of detailed studies of *individual* magazines in the post-war period.

Proceeding from the approach of periodical studies, this thesis takes as its focus *Migrant* and *POTH* and considers the ways in which these two little magazines played a role in shaping what I argue was a new direction in British poetics in the 1960s. In doing so, a variety of interrelated investigations will be carried out, examining the correlation of this 'new movement' with: the influential role played by Gael Turnbull and Ian Hamilton Finlay as poets/editors, post-war American poetry, trans-national literary friendships, the

²¹ Tom Montag, 'The Little Magazine/Small Press Connection: Some Conjectures', in *The Little Magazine in America: A Modern Documentary History*, ed. by Elliott Anderson and Mary Kinzie (Yonkers: Pushcart Press, 1978), pp. 575-593 (p. 577).

²² Latham's and Scholes's assertion that the digital environment has led to the rise of periodical studies receives ample confirmation in the arena of magazines from the 1960s and beyond (keeping in mind, however, that this scholarship has also largely remained in the realm of the internet, or confined to critical discourse in current magazines). There is a quantity of information about little magazines of these periods on the internet, ranging from institution-affiliated websites to blogs, as the Little Magazine Project at Nottingham Trent University, spearheaded by David Miller (<http://www2.ntu.ac.uk/littlemagazines/default.asp>), and the Saison Poetry Library's poetry magazine catalogue (<http://www.poetrymagazines.org.uk/>), which provides a growing catalogue of English poetry magazines from the 20th and 21st century. Blogs also provide a rich source of information about little magazines of the post-war period. One example of this is Jed Birmingham and Kyle Schlesinger's website MIMEO MIMEO (mimeomimeo.blogspot.com), concentrating on magazines from 1960s period of the 'mimeography revolution', where cheaper and faster production of little magazines became commonplace. The 'mimeography revolution' will be discussed in further detail in Chapter One.

Scottish literary milieu of the 1960s, historical avant-gardism, and Wittgenstein's language theories. Because *Migrant* and *POTH* were established within the context of their defiance of the literary 'orthodoxy', the account of their emergence and examination of their content affords insight into the history of poetic experimentation in Britain in the 1960s which have been overlooked in the study of more commercial magazines and books of the period. American literary critic and poet Yvor Winters's notorious statement from 1967 that 'England has not given us much notable poetry in the last 250 years'²³ indicts English poetry for its lack of experimentalism and progressivism. One aim of this thesis is to demonstrate that contrary to Winters's perception of literary stagnation, innovative poetics were being practised by British poets in the 1950s and 60s in little magazines and in spaces and activities related to the emerging sub-culture of the 'poetry underground'. Furthermore, as I hope to demonstrate in this thesis, these spaces and activities were not necessarily locatable in the long-established literary capital of London, but in textual spaces where writing from a variety of schools and places could virtually coalesce.

The sociological dimension of *Migrant* and *POTH* will be explored by drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the literary field of production. Bourdieu conceptualizes the production of literature as operating by rules separate from the 'social universes' of economics and politics. Rather than competing for political prestige or financial profit, agents of the literary field contend for 'the power to say with authority who are authorized to call themselves writers'.²⁴ Furthermore, Bourdieu writes that the principle of disinterestedness which characterises literary production is most notably marked in the 'subfield of restricted production', a subset within the literary field which has reached maximum autonomy and which is characterised by an outright rejection of economic and/or political profit. The constitution of literature as competing systems of belief, and the positioning of little magazine production within the subfield of restricted production, allows us to determine the values and incentives held by particular little magazine participants vis-à-vis the idea of marginalization and cultural legitimacy. *Migrant* and *POTH* are examined in this thesis as a series of social

²³ Yvor Winters, *Forms of Discovery: Critical and Historical Essays on the Forms of the Short Poem in English* (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1967), p. 347.

²⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), p. 42.

negotiations, on one hand with the particular social groups of which they were part, and on the other hand with perceived wider literary communities. Pascale Casanova's articulation of the 'world republic of letters' will be used to explore aspects of one such community, the 'international literary avant-garde', to which *Migrant* and *POTH* were frequently aligned.

Chapter One gives an overview of the British poetry field from the end of World War II to 1967, with an emphasis on little magazine production, in order to contextualize the editorial policies of *Migrant* and *POTH* as responses to the literary situation. Generally speaking, the years following the war to the late 1950s can be characterized by burgeoning literary nationalism in Britain, which was reflected in the kinds of poetry published, as well as the ways in which poetry was disseminated and deliberated in the public arena. One consequence of this was the decline in availability of non-British poetry, or at least non-British poetry which was not affiliated with what Bourdieu would call 'dominant literatures' of this period. I will suggest that the upsurge of little magazine activity in the late 1950s/early 1960s, which *Migrant* and *POTH* played key roles in inspiring, contributed significantly to reversing this pattern of cultural insularity and in diversifying the British poetic landscape. Drawing on the writing of Casanova, I will argue that the two magazines' publication of neglected works by both British and non-British writers was part of a process by which Turnbull and Finlay orientated themselves within both the national and global literary fields.

Chapters Two and Three focus on Gael Turnbull and his editing of *Migrant*. The second chapter presents a biographical sketch of Turnbull's early years as a poet-publisher (1930s-1960s), during which time he relocated several times between North America and Britain. A possible reading of *Migrant* can be made in the narrative of Turnbull's active engagement with contemporary British and American poetry throughout this period. Turnbull not only maintained extensive correspondences with poets whose works he admired, but circulated these works via *Migrant*, distribution through Migrant Books, and publication through Migrant Press. The little magazine for Turnbull was, I argue, not only a publishing venue for poetry, but a way to formulate and define a British-American literary network. *Migrant* published poetic work, but also essays and

(anonymous) letters relating directly to the activity of poetic interchange, often in explicit reference to the magazine and its contributors. This recording of artistic process confirms Richard Price's assertion that 'social relations are a significant part of what poetry [...] actually is'.²⁵ In this chapter, I also discuss the role of Turnbull's friend Michael Shayer in his capacity as the British editor of *Migrant*, and consider how Turnbull's and Shayer's literary friendship shaped the content and ethos of the magazine.

Chapter Three explores *Migrant* as a textual and social laboratory in which the theories of American poet Charles Olson as articulated in his 1950 essay-manifesto 'Projective Verse' are negotiated. Turnbull personally knew and admired Olson, and was one of the key disseminators of his work in Britain. The essay was a powerful force in not only crystallizing the Black Mountain poetry movement in America, but in influencing an entire generation of poets interested in innovative form. Broadly speaking, the 'manifesto' relates the idea of the poem as a kinetic space which records a thought or idea in the process of unfolding. Additionally, the poem according to Olson never reaches a state of 'completion' but 'remains open to its process [and] remains a "high-energy construct"'.²⁶ 'Projective Verse' goes beyond prescriptions on versification but suggests 'an attitude to reality' which places relations between objects (rather than the object itself) at the heart of poetry's ontological method. Olson's theories will be used as reference points from which to explore both the content and ethical stances espoused in *Migrant*. Drawing on his discussion of process, breath, and relation, I will demonstrate that *Migrant* can be approached as an arbitration, rather than a wholesale endorsement, of a particular trajectory of American poetic theory.

Chapters Four and Five focus on Ian Hamilton Finlay and his editorship of *POTH*. In Chapter Four, *POTH* will be contextualized within the literary milieu of Scotland in the early 1960s, to explore the extent to which Finlay's position within and against its networks shaped the little magazine's conceptualization and content. In particular, Finlay's relationship with Hugh MacDiarmid –made manifest in this period through a series of literary flytings – will be examined as an illustration of the ways in which a new tendency in

²⁵ Price, "'To Shake the Torpid Pool'", p. 16.

²⁶ Rosemarie Waldrop, 'Charles Olson: Process and Relationship', *Twentieth Century Literature* Vol.23, no.4 (Dec 1977) pp.467-486 (p. 468).

Scottish poetry was emerging through active engagement with and resistance to the ideas and works of Scottish writers of an older generation. To illustrate Finlay's idiosyncratic vision for poetry publication, *POTH* will be compared to another Scottish little magazine of the period, *Lines Review* (1952-1998). Finlay's literary friendship with poets outside Britain will also be considered as an integral facet of the magazine's formulation as an avant-garde publication. Finally, in evaluating and comparing Finlay's and MacDiarmid's attitudes to internationalism and use of vernacular speech in poetry, I will demonstrate that the two seemingly adversarial figures in fact shared common aesthetic goals regarding Scotland's role in the wider literary environment.

Finlay frequently drew links between poetry and playful activity (such as toys and games); this correlation will be used in Chapter Five as an entry point to explore *POTH*'s editorial policy of 'panache, humour, beauty, tradition and experiment'.²⁷ A parallel can be drawn, I suggest, between Finlay's consideration of objects of play and Ludwig Wittgenstein's positing of language as games, in particular the latter's discussion of 'rules' and 'diversity'. This framework will be first used to consider the overall trajectory of *POTH*'s editorial strategies vis-à-vis 'complacent' attitudes to language and poetry. Next, concrete and lyric poetry in *POTH* will be examined as procedures of playful activity: the 'rules' regulating these poetic traditions, far from creating monumental and rigid pronouncements, encourage the reader to interact with them as objects of use. Finally, the chapter considers the interplay of *POTH* and a tradition of playful poetics by examining aspects of typographical experiments made by Russian avant-garde poets of the early 20th century. Such works, published in two issues of *POTH*, give insight into the ways in which Finlay was formulating an innovative approach to poetry which was nonetheless grounded in tradition.

²⁷ Alec Finlay, 'Introduction: Picking the Last Wildflower', in *Ian Hamilton Finlay; Selections*, ed. by Alec Finlay (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), pp. 1-61 (p. 20).

Chapter 1: British Poetry Scene 1945-1967

Gael Turnbull's little magazine *Migrant* (1959-1960) and Ian Hamilton Finlay's *Poor.Old.Tired.Horse*.²⁸ (1961-1967) are widely acknowledged to be two of the most important periodicals to have contributed to the diversification of British poetry in the early 1960s. In publishing innovative British poetry alongside poetry from abroad, and in linking poetry from past periods to contemporary experimental work, *Migrant* and *POTH* lay much of the groundwork for the surge of poetic activity which later came to be known as the British Poetry Revival.²⁹ Observing British poetry activity in 1964, Gael Turnbull remarked that in contrast to the situation in 1958, when 'there [were] almost no little magazines or little presses likely to publish any of the writers we found interesting',³⁰ there was now a proliferation of small presses publishing those very neglected writers, as well as other new voices. The material published in *Migrant* gives a flavour of the kinds of works which Turnbull believed were under-published in the 1950s by British small presses, let alone by larger presses. These include European poetry in translation, works by an older generation of British writers overlooked during their lifetimes, American poetry, and poetry by younger British writers. Finlay, who detected hostility in Scotland towards 'the idea of lyric poetry, foreign poetry & 'modern' literature',³¹ like Turnbull used his magazine as an outlet for the poetries he appreciated but believed were unduly disregarded.

Migrant and *POTH* did not appear in a vacuum: they were established as responses to their literary and social environments. Before an exploration of

²⁸ Hitherto referred to as *POTH*.

²⁹ Coined by poet Eric Mottram in 1974, this term was an attempt to make concrete an arts movement which he believed had been stirring up in Britain for over a decade. This upheaval of British poetics was characterised, according to Mottram, by works written 'within the current range of forms in world poetry- open field, projective verse, sound text, concrete poetry, surrealist and dada developments, pop lyrics, and various conceptual forms. Imitation and school are relegated; the skills develop free awareness and usage of a wide range of procedures.'

Eric Mottram, 'The British Poetry Revival, 1960-1975,' in *New British Poetries: The Scope of the Possible*, ed. by Robert Hampson and Peter Barry (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 15-50 (pp. 16-17).

³⁰ Gael Turnbull, 'Migrant – A Personal Account', *Credences*, 2/3, 1 (1981/82), 97-99 (p. 99).

³¹ Ian Hamilton Finlay, 'Autobiographical Sketch', in *Selections: Ian Hamilton Finlay*, ed. by Alec Finlay (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), pp. xix-xxi (p.xx).

these magazines can take place, it is necessary to establish a sense of the British poetry scene of the 1950s and 1960s in order to understand *Migrant*'s and *POTH*'s activities within it. The overview presented in this chapter will cover the period from the years following World War II to 1967, when the final issue of *POTH* was published (*Migrant* closed in 1960). With a particular focus on the 1950s, the overview will attempt to give a general picture of literary trends within which Turnbull's and Finlay's editorial policies for their magazines can be contextualized. Equally important in formulating a clearer picture of *Migrant* and *POTH* is to consider them, and the activities of Turnbull and Finlay, within the social realm of their production and reception. Turnbull's identification of *Migrant* as a publication intended for 'a minimal number of readers' who were 'maximally interested',³² and Finlay's alignment of *POTH* to an 'international avant-garde',³³ indicate that the operation of a little magazine in this period was characterised by opposition to the notion of mainstream literary production. Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the 'literary field of production' illuminates this phenomenon. According to Bourdieu, the central law governing literary production is disinterestedness, which 'establishes a negative correlation between temporal (notably financial) success and properly artistic value'.³⁴ Bourdieu's theories help us to situate and more clearly define the activities and motivations of *Migrant* and *POTH*, along with other little magazines sharing their aims, within a specific matrix of *literary* social relationships governed by competition and hierarchies which do not necessarily correspond to the laws of politics or economics.

Pascale Casanova's concept of 'world literary space' will also be used to frame the endeavours of Turnbull and Finlay as editors who encouraged transnational literary exchange. Casanova's model expands upon Bourdieu's methodology by situating the literary producer within the schemata of both the national and international realm. Whereas Bourdieu takes for granted that the literary field is shaped by nationalism, Casanova's methodology is centred on the interrelationship between the 'pull' of literary nationalism and literary

³² Letter insert, *Migrant* 1 (July 1959).

³³ 'international avant-garde publications from Wild Hawthorn Press', insert to *POTH* 12.

³⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), p. 164.

internationalism upon the producer of a work.³⁵ She explicitly links the concept of institutionalised consecration with ‘national literature’, thereby proposing that a socio-historic study of a writer and his/her work must entail the tracing of the writer’s (or editor’s) relationship to the ‘field of power’ on a nation-centred political and economic basis.³⁶ Casanova’s framework allows us to examine the two magazine’s publication of works by both British and non-British writers as not a straightforward trafficking of ideas and techniques, but as part of a process by which Turnbull and Finlay orientated themselves within both the British and global literary fields.

Post-war Poetry Activity

There is a critical consensus that World War II had a deep impact on the British poetry scene. Alvin Sullivan suggests that the upsurge in magazine activity during the war years ‘clearly owed something to a general feeling that the arts represented the civilized values for which England was fighting’.³⁷ This period saw the launch of numerous magazines which published writing from countries as Greece, France, Belgium, Norway, and India.³⁸ This trend was related in part to the migration of poets prompted by the war, with the traffic flowing both ways: British poets established magazines from their various outposts, and foreign nationals set up magazines in Britain. Miller and Price describe the magazines *Focus* (1945-1950) and *The Changing World* (1947-1949) as representative of the internationalist magazines of the 1940s demonstrating ‘an even-handed interest in European and American literature [...] balanced with a confidence in the variety of different kinds of British poetry that will stand comparison with the best of other cultures’ writing’.³⁹ American poets who had been published in English magazines in the 1930s, such as William Carlos Williams and E. E. Cummings, along with a new generation of popular American

³⁵ Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. by M.B. DeBevoise (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), pp. 108-109.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

³⁷ Alvin Sullivan, *British Literary Magazine: The modern age 1914-84* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), p. xxiii.

³⁸ David Miller and Richard Price, *British Poetry Magazines 1914-2000: A History and Biography of ‘Little Magazines.’* (London: British Library, 2006), pp. 54-55.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

poets such as John Berryman and Elizabeth Bishop, were also represented in British magazines of this period.⁴⁰

Governmental policies and advances in media and print technologies during the war also had an effect on poetry activity. The creation of the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA) in 1940 to promote British culture, as well the broadcasting of poetry programmes on the BBC – such as Dylan Thomas’s popular poetry readings – led to a wider dissemination of poetry. Simon Armitage and Robert Crawford in their introduction to the 1998 anthology *The Penguin Book of Poetry from Britain and Ireland since 1945* posit that the Butler Education Act of 1944, which made secondary education free to all students, significantly ‘extended the educational franchise, bringing about a movement in the constituency of readers and writers’.⁴¹ Armitage and Crawford see this trend as ‘as part of a shift towards post-imperial, pluralist societies and communities’, and link this to the rise of a new generation of poets: ‘Where Auden in the early thirties wrote from, and most immediately addressed, a public-school-educated Oxbridge coterie audience, post-war poets as diverse as Philip Larkin, Ted Hughes, and Stevie Smith wrote subtle, accessible and surprising poetry, communicating more directly with a wider public’.⁴² Sullivan writes that the most visible poetry of the years immediately following the war reflected the changing readership demographic which included ‘the newly educated lower middle classes’.⁴³ Popular poetry of this period according to Sullivan tended to be in the mode of ‘social realism’, addressing new concerns and experiences such as the welfare state, grammar schools, and redbrick universities.⁴⁴

Armitage’s and Crawford’s unmitigated optimism regarding post-war British poetry’s reflection of ‘pluralist societies’, however, is not a representative critical stance vis-à-vis the trajectory of poetry in this period. Hugh Kenner in *A Sinking Island: The Modern English Writers* perhaps takes the extreme counter-position to Armitage and Crawford when he blames the creation of a mass

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 55.

⁴¹ Simon Armitage and Robert Crawford, ‘Introduction’, in *The Penguin Book of Poetry from Britain and Ireland since 1945*, ed. by Simon Armitage and Robert Crawford (London: Viking, 1998), pp. xix-xxxii (p. xx).

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Sullivan, p. xxv.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

reading public for marginalizing ‘interesting’ poetry informed by modernism and for fostering the notion of an ‘official’ British poetry that is provincial, easily accessible, and is ‘nothing difficult’ as Larkin is famously said to have called his own poetry.⁴⁵ Kenner argues that the post-war period witnessed the narrowing rather than the widening of the scope of British poetry, both in formal technique and in its consideration of diverse communities.⁴⁶ Jonathan Rose’s argument in *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* regarding post-war modernist writing and mass audiences, however, poses a challenge to Kenner’s perception. Rose writes:

[...] mass education, even mass higher education, never produces a ‘common culture’ [...] Whenever the masses are educated up to a given level of culture, elite audiences and intellectuals will have already pressed on to the next and more challenging level.⁴⁷

If Kenner bemoans the diminishing of culture at the hands of populism, Rose would counter that the poetic experimenters in fact have little to worry about. Self-styled avant-garde intellectuals, he argues, whose social identity is contingent upon exclusivity, will always ‘carve out that market niche’ by writing ‘ever more innovative, complex, and difficult’ work.⁴⁸ For those not attuned to specialized poetry circles, therefore, the prevalent picture of poetry in this period was arguably Anglo-centric. Sullivan flags up the publisher Penguin’s cancellation of its book series *New Writing* in 1950 as a significant event vis-à-vis restricting of poetry in this period.⁴⁹ The series, which distributed 100,000 copies per issue at its peak, promoted the writing of younger writers from

⁴⁵ Hugh Kenner, *A Sinking Island: The Modern English Writers* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1987), pp. 5-6.

⁴⁶ Critics such as Peter Barry, Richard Caddell, Robert Hampson, Peter Quartermain, and Robert Sheppard have variously called for the reassessment of the history of British poetry in the 1960s and 70s to more fully accommodate for the discussion of lesser-known writers and texts of this period.

⁴⁷ Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 436.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Sullivan, p. xxiii.

England and America, and also featured reviews music and visual art.⁵⁰ Its closure undoubtedly made it more difficult for British audiences to keep up-to-date with the work of younger American poets.

Edward Lucie-Smith, taking a stance not dissimilar from Kenner's, in his introduction to the 1970 Penguin anthology *British Poetry since 1945* gives this analysis of poetry activity in the post-war period:

[T]he late forties were occupied, though rather languidly, by an aftermath of the apocalyptic romanticism which had found favour during the war. This was followed by a reaction against modernism and internationalism which was typified in the fifties by the work of the Movement poets.⁵¹

Robert Conquest's anthology *New Lines* (1956) first identified Conquest, John Wain, Elizabeth Jennings, John Holloway, Philip Larkin, Thom Gunn, Kingsley Amis, Donald Davie and D.J. Enright as the Movement poets. Many of 'Movement poets' however denied this identification of collectivity, and as many literary historians have pointed out, the group scattered as soon as the label was placed upon them. The perception that the literary climate in the 1950s was unfavourable to experimentation and influence from abroad is perhaps most famously articulated by Alfred Alvarez in his 1962 essay 'The New Poetry, or Beyond the Gentility Principle'. Alvarez contentiously asserts that the 'conservatism' of British poetry in the 1950s was begun two decades previously: 'since about 1930 the machinery of modern English poetry seems to have been controlled by a series of negative feed-backs designed to produce precisely the effect Hardy wanted'.⁵² Here Alvarez is referring to a comment that Thomas Hardy had made to Robert Graves in the 1920s that '*vers libre* could come to nothing in England: "All we can do is to write on the old themes in the old styles, but try to do a little better than those who went before us"'.⁵³ Alvarez further

⁵⁰ A.T. Tolley, *British Literary Periodicals of World War II & Aftermath: A Critical History* (Kemptville, Ontario: The Golden Dog Press, 2007), p. 193

⁵¹ Edward Lucie-Smith, 'Preface' in *British Poetry since 1945* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), pp.19-31 (p. 29).

⁵² A. Alvarez, 'The New Poetry, or Beyond the Gentility Principle' in *The New Poetry* (revised edition), ed. by A. Alvarez (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), pp. 21-32 (p. 21).

⁵³ Ibid.

reiterates this point by giving a pithy history of English poetry from the 1930s to the 1950s, with the aim to illustrate conservatism as the principal downfall of English poetry. He identifies a trend in poetry, beginning with the rise in the popularity of W.H. Auden in the 1930s, where exploratory forms of the Modernists such as T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound were forsaken for a more 'austere' poetry written in traditional form with a 'highly up-to-date idiom', which created a readership 'who believed, apparently, that to be modern was merely a matter of sounding modern [...] it had precious little to do with originality'.⁵⁴ The solemnity of Auden is challenged in the 40s, writes Alvarez, by a tide of romantic and 'anti-intellectual' poetry championed by Dylan Thomas. In British poetry of the 1950s and early 1960s, Alvarez detects the 'third negative feedback' as a reaction against the popular poetry of the 40s: 'an attempt to show that the poet is not a strange creature inspired; on the contrary, he is just like the man next-door – in fact, he probably *is* the man next door'. Alvarez sees this trend crystallized in the poetry of The Movement and accuses these poets of producing a conservative poetics which held that ' [...]life, give or take a few social distinctions, is the same as ever, that gentility, decency, and all the other social totems will eventually muddle through'.⁵⁵

Movement poetry and literary nationalism

The 1950s is widely perceived as the period in which the Movement poets came to prominence. Their popularity can be linked to the ways in which literature was reaching mass audiences, both in households and educational institutions. For Donald Davie, the wide distribution of Movement poetry via culturally sanctioned mediums insured what he sees as their literary hegemony: 'Precisely because the positions that matter are few, it is entirely feasible for a group to secure one or two sub-editorial chairs and a few reviewing "spots", so as to impose their shared proclivities and opinions as the reigning orthodoxy of a decade'.⁵⁶ Such positions included John Wain's post at the BBC,⁵⁷ Anthony

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 22.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p.25 and pp.27-28.

⁵⁶ Donald Davie, 'The Varsity Match', *Poetry Nation* 2 (1974), p. 74. Davie's own critical position is complicated. Although he was affiliated with the English Movement poetry, he later wrote

Hartley's editorial position at the *Spectator*, and Davie's career as a renowned literary critic.⁵⁸ Movement poetry was also represented heavily in the new magazines established in this decade: Sullivan writes that the popular *London Magazine* (1953 -), edited by John Lehmann, was heavily sympathetic to Movement poetry. Lehmann also broadcast readings of Movement poetry on his monthly radio series *New Soundings*, which ran from 1952 to 1953 and reached an estimated audience of 100,000 per episode.⁵⁹ Yet the conclusion that the Movement poets were entirely responsible for the wholesale appropriation of British poetics after the war, and that they bullied the poetry audience into exclusively favouring their work and creating a tunnel-visioned poetic aesthetic in the process, is not a fair assessment. The popularity of the Movement is perhaps indicative of new attitudes towards poetry as a widely marketable commodity: publishers and broadcasters printed and broadcast poets whom they believed would give them profit, economically or otherwise. Set within this trend, Davie sees a rise of a reading public who 'conceiv[e] of poetry as a service industry [...] such a reader expects *service*; he expects the experience to be brought all the way over to him, not left halfway where his own sympathies must go out to meet it'.⁶⁰ In this light, it is feasible that poetry deemed 'difficult', such as poetry from abroad or works containing experimental forms, remained out of the public's eye.

One 'service' which Movement poetry potentially provided was the maintenance of the status-quo, certainly to be desired after the social and economic upheaval of the war. Perhaps more significantly, Movement poetry was utilized by its apologists as a vehicle for nationalism. Andrew Crozier states that the 'polemic anthologies' distributed in Britain since the 1950s were discernibly patriotic, presenting the poems 'within the inclusive reference of national representation. As in the phrase "the best of British", the frame of

sympathetically about British modernist verse and advocated the writing of such poets as Basil Bunting and Charles Tomlinson (to whom he was a mentor and friend).

⁵⁷ Wain ran the *First Reading* programme in 1953 which featured poetry by the 'Movement poets'.

⁵⁸ Robert Sheppard, 'British Poetry and its Discontents', in *Cultural Revolution? The Challenge of the Arts in the 1960s*, ed. by Bart Moore-Gilbert and John Seed (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 160-180 (p.161).

⁵⁹ Blake Morrison, *The Movement: English Poetry and Fiction of the 1950s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 42.

⁶⁰ Donald Davie, *Under Briggflatts: A History of Poetry in Great Britain: 1960-1988* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1989), p. 85.

reference of national culture and the notion of quality have been brought into uncomfortable mutual alignment, as though the prestige of national origin constituted a claim on the world's attention, or at any rate, was seal of approval enough for us'.⁶¹ Pascale Casanova's argument that 'literatures are...not a pure emanation of national identity; they are constructed through literary rivalries, which are always denied, and struggles, which are always international'⁶² helps us to situate post-war literary nationalism in Britain within the wider context of a literary rivalry between Britain and other nations. The idea of the nation, Casanova writes, is the precise articulation of internationalism; the acknowledgment of the distinctiveness of another group leads in turn to the reinforcing of a group's autonomy based on traits peculiar to it: 'sealed off from each other behind national boundaries like so many monads that contain the principle of their own causality'.⁶³ The war years placed Britain in starker relief against other nations. Setting aside what are undoubtedly complex political and economic intercessions, we may speculate that such juxtaposition raised the stakes for 'cultural autonomy' based on the belief that Britain was *fundamentally* unique from other nations. Robert Conquest's introduction to the second edition of the *New Lines* anthology in 1963 – featuring the work of the Movement poets – is one demonstration of this resistive attitude to outside influence vis-à-vis British culture:

The human condition from which the poetry of one country springs cannot be readily tapped by that of another. The British culture is receptive to immigration, if not to invasion: but it remains highly idiosyncratic. It is part of our experience, and for that no one else's experience, however desirable, can be a substitute.⁶⁴

Apologists of Movement poetry in this period tended to equate poetry production with nationalism which was often described on pseudo-mystical or romantic

⁶¹ Andrew Crozier, 'Preface', in *A Various Art*, ed. by Andrew Crozier and Tim Longville (Manchester: Carcanet, 1987), pp. 11-14 (p. 11).

⁶² Casanova, p. 36.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

⁶⁴ Robert Conquest, 'Introduction', in *New Lines II: An Anthology*, ed. by Robert Conquest (London: Macmillan, 1963), pp. xiii–xxix (p. xxvi).

terms. Graham Hough in *Image and Experience*, for instance, correlates English culture with the lyric tradition, and evokes the ghost of Johann Gottfried Herder with his proselytising of the 'English spirit':

Deep in the folk memory of English literary critics is the echo of a time when it was possible to speak of something called 'the English spirit'... [It] means something like the spirit of the language, the whole drift and pressure given by the whole body of poetry written in English. The suggestion that knocks on the door is that specifically 'modern' poetry is hostile to this spirit has tried to move against that pressure.⁶⁵

Donald Davie's 1963 essay in *Granta* magazine is an attempt to more firmly establish the basis of national collectivity, but his deployment of the collective pronoun betrays an attitude of essentialism:

I think that everyone knows, really, that Philip Larkin is the effective laureate of our England. Other poets may criticize what Larkin does with the truths he discovers, what attitudes he takes up to the landscapes and the weather of his own poems; but those landscapes and that weather – none of us, surely, fails to recognize them? And this is just as true if we think of landscapes and weather metaphorically; we recognize in Larkin's poems the seasons of present-day England, but we recognize also the seasons of an English soul – the moods he expresses are our moods too, though we may deal with them differently.⁶⁶

Andrew Crozier writes that such assessment of Movement poetry, in aligning literary production with nationalism, secured the approval of mass audiences and thus consecration of their works as 'literature': 'Traditional forms are invoked not so much for the freedom they can confer but for support. They define the space in which the self can act with poetic authority, while at the same time, in

⁶⁵ Graham Hough, *Image and Experience: Studies in a Literary Revolution* (London: Duckworth, 1960), pp. 7-8.

⁶⁶ Donald Davie, quoted in Andrew Crozier, 'Thrills and Frills: Poetry as Figures of Empirical Lyricism', in *Society and Literature: 1945-1970*, ed. by Alan Sinfield (London: Methuen, 1983), pp. 199-233 (p. 203).

the absence of assurances provided by conventionally felt poetic experience, they secure the status of the text'.⁶⁷

Movement poetry, or at least much of its critical reception, was only one articulation of the nationalistic mood of post-war British culture. Andrew Duncan speculates that in Scotland, its own national programme – characterised by its Presbyterianism and reverence for its own discrete history and vernacular languages – was the reason why more traditional poetry continued to be favoured there in the 1950s:

The scene in Scotland saw [...] [an] expansion of higher education and of the poetry audience, but preliminary analysis suggests that a formal breakthrough was not attained in the poetry of those countries, because the climate of optimism and expectations of radical change was channelled into nationalism, and this (in a suggested interpretation) pointed the poets backwards, towards identifiably local schools and forms, and towards an imagined community to be addressed in easy and simplified terms.⁶⁸

Furthermore, Duncan suggests that Scotland's nationalism, which may have impeded the development of more experimental or outward-looking poetry, was maintained by the intellectual classes, rather than necessarily by the demands made by the wider public. This reflects the sophism that Casanova identifies in those who drive the 'instruments of national identity [...] literary institutions, academies, school syllabuses, the canon': 'intellectual production depends on both language and nation, but literary texts express "the founding principle of the nation"''.⁶⁹

Post-war nationalism in Britain therefore may be interpreted as a means by which politically dominant groups maintained their positions by fostering a cultural atmosphere hostile to experimentation and international influences (thereby eliminating competition and opposition). Miller and Price in their

⁶⁷ Crozier, 'Thrills and Frills: Poetry as Figures of Empirical Lyricism', in *Society and Literature: 1945-1970*, ed. by Alan Sinfield (London: Methuen, 1983), pp. 199-233 (p. 206).

⁶⁸ Andrew Duncan, 'Such that commonly each: A *Various Art* and the Cambridge Leisure Centre', *Jacket* 20 (December 2002), <http://jacketmagazine.com/20/dunc-camb.html>

⁶⁹ Casanova, p. 105.

survey of magazine activity in this period note an overall downward trend in the representation of poetry from other countries, especially in the publication of Western European literature in translation.⁷⁰ The departure of displaced foreign nationals who had established periodicals in Britain – with no magazines being re-established maintaining those links – may have contributed to this trend, although the rise of conservative intellectualism likely played a role. As Sullivan observes, the closure in the 1950s of British magazines set up in the 1940s promoting transnational exchange was due in part to the ‘disappointment and disillusion’ towards ‘the old causes – socialism, Marxism and pacifism’⁷¹, which may have made literary nationalism a more appealing alternative. If the war period was characterised by relative cultural porousness to internationalist-minded political movements between allied nations, the post-war period witnessed a decline of such exchange. The closure of publications after the war encouraging transnational literary exchange, and the publication of ‘best of British’ anthologies, can be constituted as part of the conservative, nationalistic response to the influx of both political ideology and literature into Britain from abroad during the war years.

Dominant literature

Pierre Bourdieu’s conceptualization of the cultural field as a matrix of rivalries between systems of belief allows us to place Conquest’s and Davie’s appraisal of Movement poetry within the larger picture of British literary politics. Bourdieu imagines two binary poles, the heteronomous and autonomous principles, as structuring the literary field.⁷² The adherents of the heteronomous principle belong to the dominant class, in that they possess political clout and/or economic capital, along with ‘the power to say with authority who are authorized to call themselves writers’.⁷³ Proponents of the autonomous principle, on the other hand, are characterized precisely by their *lack* of political and economic power, and their production of works intended only for other autonomous producers as

⁷⁰ Miller and Price, p. 85.

⁷¹ Sullivan, p. xxiii.

⁷² Bourdieu defines the literary field of production as ‘a separate social universe having its laws of functioning independent of those of politics and the economy [,being] endowed with specific principles of evaluation of practise and works. (Bourdieu, pp. 162-163.)

⁷³ Bourdieu, p. 42.

opposed to a mass market. Within Bourdieu's conceptual framework, Conquest's and Davie's positions, as represented in widely circulated publications (*Granta*, founded in 1889, was sponsored by Cambridge University; Conquest's *New Lines* anthology was first published in 1956 and went to reprint in 1963), can be understood as emissions from the dominant literary class of the field. Statements such as theirs likely contributed to the solidification within mainstream perception of Movement poetry's 'inherent' cultural value vis-à-vis the rising sentiment of patriotism after the war.

Bourdieu's model of literature as products of rivalries situated between the heteronomous and autonomous poles offers one way to conceive of the American poetry being published in Britain in the 1950s. Although translations of Western European works decreased in presence in British magazines as previously noted, American work was still being presented, as witnessed in new magazines of this period including *Encounter* (1953-1990) and *The Poet* (1951-1957). These magazines, however, differed drastically in the poetry they published. *Encounter*, edited by Stephen Spender, tended to publish Movement poets alongside American poets already well-established in America, such as Theodore Roethke and Robert Lowell. Lowell for instance was according to Alvarez 'widely noticed' in Britain for his inclusion in many British poetry anthologies as one of only a few Americans, including Alvarez's *The New Poetry*.⁷⁴ Lowell's positioning within the poetry orthodoxy in America – he served as the Poetry Laureate and taught at such established institutions as Harvard University and the University of Iowa – provides an insight into his 'acceptance' by poetry editors who tended to endorse dominant poetics in Britain at this time, such as Spender. An association can thus be envisaged between a dominant poetics in one country and a dominant poetics of another.⁷⁵ *The Poet* can correlatively be identified as a voice of Bourdieu's autonomous principle. Edited by W. Price Turner from Glasgow, *The Poet* tended to publish younger poets, especially those from Scotland such as Iain Crichton Smith, Edwin

⁷⁴ Alvarez, p. 7.

⁷⁵ Miller and Price suggest furthermore that *Encounter*, unknown to Spender, was secretly underpinned by CIA funds to encourage friendly cultural relations between Britain and America. The possible underwriting of transnational poetry exchange by sponsors with political incentives is certainly intriguing. Miller and Price also identify the magazine *Perspectives* (1952-1956) as another example of political underwriting, being sponsored by the American Ford Foundation to export American poetry to Britain. (Miller and Price, p. 86.)

Morgan, Gael Turnbull, and Burns Singer. The magazine, which *Mica* (1960-1962) magazine reported as publishing 'a higher proportion of American poets than any other British magazine before or since',⁷⁶ published poets such as Robert Creeley and Kenneth Patchen, both of whom did not receive wide recognition in America at this time, as Lowell did. As Charles Bernstein notes, 'Too often, the works selected to represent cultural diversity are those that accept the model of representation by the dominant culture in the first place'.⁷⁷

Experimental literature and lessons from abroad

Price and Miller observe that a key trend in magazine activity after the war was the waning of London as the centre of periodical activity: in the 1930s, 50% of literary magazines were published in London, but in the 1940s this was reduced to 41%.⁷⁸ Another development was the increased regionalisation of magazines in England and Scotland. The appearance of region-focused magazines such as *The New Shetlander* (1947-) *The Cornish Review* (1949-1952), and *Lines Review* (1952-1998), which published the work of writers based in their respective localities, suggests a renewed interest in self-identifying cultures within Britain.⁷⁹ Contrasted to this is the repeated focus on a small group of poets (i.e. Movement poets) by London-based publications such as the aforementioned *The London Magazine*, and by the BBC (headquartered in London) via their poetry programmes. New magazines established outside London, in particular those based in university towns, were also more likely to publish non-mainstream American poets. These include *Prospect* (1959-1964) in Cambridge, which published Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Ed Dorn, Paul Blackburn, and Charles Olson; and University of Edinburgh's *Jabberwock* (1959) which published Beat poetry.⁸⁰ Lucie-Smith writes: 'Poets outside of London have been, in general, in closer touch with what has been going on abroad than poets in the capital – a

⁷⁶ 'List of Contributors', *Mica* 3 (1961), 34-36 (p. 35).

⁷⁷ Charles Bernstein, *A Poetics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 6.

⁷⁸ Miller and Price, p. 55.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁸⁰ That is not to say, however, that there were no magazines based in London publishing younger or lesser well-known British and American writers. One example is *The Window* (1950-), which published younger poets both British and American as Turnbull, Roy Fisher, and Creeley, alongside translations of French modernist writers as Francis Ponge and René Char. (Miller and Price, pp. 84-85.)

striking example is the widespread international connexions enjoyed by the Scottish Concrete poets, who are part of a movement which stretched half-way across the world before literary London had ever heard of it'.⁸¹

Casanova's model of the 'international writer' can be used to understand why writing from abroad was more likely to be published in little magazines rather than in publications with larger circulation rates. Though relying heavily on Bourdieu's framework of the literary field of production, Casanova departs from Bourdieu in her emphasis on the 'international' aspect of the autonomous pole, arguing that the more autonomous writers working in his/her native country must necessarily 'know the laws of world literary space' in order to 'subvert the dominant forms of their respective national fields'.⁸² Casanova's 'international writer' is therefore someone who is both 'denationalized' and 'internationalized'; that is, they look outwards from their national field to international sources for literary innovation in order to challenge the dominant nationalism of their native literary environment.⁸³ English poet Roy Fisher's recollection about Turnbull's activities in the early 1950s places Turnbull as an 'international writer':

Whereas the 'Movement' people were coming through things like *Encounter* and *The London Magazine*, they were hitting the mainstream, and if you weren't that, you weren't getting in. And Gael Turnbull saw it in *The Window* – he's a person of very mixed background and a congenital outsider – he was collecting material for a guest-edited number of Cid Corman's [American] magazine *Origin*, the first series. And he was completely free in what he chose. Gael was temperamentally not interested in the English mainstream so he went sniffing around the outside.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Lucie-Smith, p. 26.

⁸² Casanova, p. 109.

⁸³ One example is the Scottish poet Alexander Trocchi, who edited the Francophone magazine *Merlin* (1952-1954) from Paris. *Merlin* tended to publish work by writers in Trocchi's circle in Paris, which included French writers and expatriate British and American writers and translators. The magazine contained poetry, criticism, and translations of work, including inaugural translations of works by Samuel Beckett and Jean Genet.

⁸⁴ Roy Fisher, Roy, 'Roy Fisher in Interview with John Tranter', *Jacket* 1 (December 2001), <http://jacketmagazine.com/01/fisher-iv.html>.

This ‘outside’ for Turnbull constituted not only British poets neglected by the bigger magazines and presses, but writers from abroad who were in an analogous position of opposition to the dominant poetics of their own countries. Casanova’s model alerts us to the transnational correspondences which were frequently drawn between autonomous literary producers. In looking beyond national boundaries, and publishing work by poets also inclined to trans-national exchange, Turnbull effectively entered a context – Casanova would call this the word republic of letters – already criss-crossed with exchange routes.⁸⁵

American poet Robert Creeley, whom Turnbull regularly published, serves to illustrate this point. As Turnbull felt a sense of alienation from dominant poetics in Britain, Creeley, too, was estranged from much of the poetry being endorsed by the dominant cultural institutions in America. He writes about the literary atmosphere created by the New Critics in an introduction to the 1967 anthology *The New Writing in the USA*:

The forties were a hostile time for the writers here included. The colleges and universities were dominant in their insistence upon an *idea* of form extrinsic to the given instance. Poems were equivalent to cars insofar as many could occur of similar pattern – although each was, of course, ‘singular’. But it was this assumption of a *mould*, of a means that could be gained beyond the literal fact of the writing *here and now* that had authority.⁸⁶

Creeley’s association with The Black Mountain College, an experimental college promoting multi-disciplinary, avant-garde experimentation in the arts, contextualises his attitude vis-à-vis the perception of the authoritative stance of the universities endorsing ‘moulds’. Creeley’s launching of the little magazine *The Black Mountain Review* to house his and like-minded poets’ opposition to ‘established’ poetry forms can therefore be understood as a challenge to the institutionalized poetic form as well as to the vehicles of dissemination utilised

⁸⁵ *Migrant’s* mailing list, for example, was given to Turnbull by W. Price Turner, the editor of the aforementioned, international-minded little magazine *The Poet*.

Richard Price, ‘Migrant the Magnificent’, *PN Review* (Jan-Feb 2007), 29-33 (p.30).

⁸⁶ Robert Creeley, ‘Introduction to *The New Writing in the USA*’, reprinted in Robert Creeley, *The Collected Essays of Robert Creeley* (Berkeley: University of Berkeley Press, 1989), pp. 89-96 (p. 89).

by established institutions. If Kenyon College, for example, with its *Kenyon Review* was the bastion for New Criticism, then Creeley conceptualised *The Black Mountain Review* as the textual home for a American poetry free from the constraints of the 'moulds' imposed by universities and by dominant literary criticism.⁸⁷ Furthermore, the little magazine was for Creeley not only an act of resistance to the literary orthodoxy, but a reaction to the lack of exposure of poetry from abroad. Following in the footsteps of internationalist minded European little magazines as *Merlin* and *Fragmente*,⁸⁸ *The Black Mountain Review* published translated works in French and German, 13th century English verse, and essays on Provençal and Spanish literature.

The activities of a particular group of poets in America, The Black Mountain poets, and the modernist artists and writers from whom they took inspiration, significantly influenced the younger British poets seeking to side-step the mainstream poetry scene. By engaging in a conversation with them, and with other poets from abroad, British poets such as Turnbull, and Finlay, among others, stepped out of the dominant scheme of British poetics in this period. Robert Sheppard's statement that Movement poetry was 'not only an anti-modernist poetic of socialist irony [...] but a self-conscious publishing machine' is a common critical charge against Movement poetry.⁸⁹ For English poet Charles Tomlinson, the publishing climate and the pervasiveness of the 'anti-modernist poetic' went hand-in-hand: 'The fifties were an unpropitious time to write the kind of verse that interested me, and England an unpropitious place in which to publish it. An heir of Pound, Moore, Crane, Stevens must inevitably appear an odd fish in English waters'.⁹⁰ Tomlinson's tactic of casting the modernists as historical precedents for literary experimentation was also a

⁸⁷ Robert Creeley, 'On *Black Mountain Review*' in *The Little Magazine in America: A Modern Documentary History*, ed. by Elliott Anderson and Mary Kinzie (Yonkers: Pushcart Press, 1978), pp. 248-261 (p. 253).

⁸⁸ Ranier Gerhardt, the editor of *Fragmente*, attempted to internationalize Germany's poetry scene after the war by enlisting Creeley as the magazine's American editor, publishing works by Basil Bunting, Olson, William Carlos Williams, and Creeley in the magazine, and establishing a small press which disseminated small paperbacks of poetry from abroad. (Creeley, 'On *Black Mountain Review*', pp. 253-254.)

⁸⁹ Sheppard, p. 161.

⁹⁰ Charles Tomlinson, *Some Americans: A Personal Record* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), p. 1.

strategy of American little magazine editors. American poet Michael Annania, editor of *Audit* (1962-1967), for instance writes that ‘the magazines that presented the ‘new poetry’ of the 1950s all looked to a tradition of experimentation in the twenties and before’.⁹¹ Furthermore, the perceived ‘anti-modernism’ of Movement poetry is related by its critics not to its lack of formal experimentation but to attitudes of complacency and cultural insularity. Andrew Crozier writes:

[T]he poets who altered taste in the 1950s did so by means of a common rhetoric that foreclosed the possibilities of language within its own devices: varieties of tone, rhythm, of form, of image, were narrowly limited, as were conceptions of the scope and character of poetic discourse, its relation to the self, to knowledge, to history, and to the world. Poetry was seen as an art in relation to its own conventions – and a pusillanimous set of conventions at that [...] To its owners’ satisfaction the signs of art had been subsumed within a closed cultural programme.⁹²

Lucie-Smith argues that the American poets’ impact on British poets was not due to their nationality as such; but rather because ‘they point the way back through the old, international modernist tradition, and are the more accessible because they happen to write the same language [...] the message of the Black Mountain poets (for all their debt to William Carlos Williams and his search for a truly American speech) is a stylistic one. Stylistic preoccupations are far more easily transplanted than social ones’.⁹³ Especially key to the project of the Black Mountain poets, and exemplified in the experimental educational institution Black Mountain College, was the conception of literature as belonging to an entire family of arts, and of poetic technique as an interdisciplinary venture engaged with all art forms. Ken Edwards suggests that more mainstream post-war literary and anti-literary phenomena in Europe, such as the

⁹¹ Michael Anania, ‘Of Living Belfry and Rampart: On American Literary Magazines since 1950’, *TriQuarterly* 43 (Fall 1978), 6-23 (p.12).

⁹² Crozier, ‘Preface’, p. 12.

⁹³ Lucie-Smith, p. 30.

sound/text/concrete movement or the writings of the French *Tel Quel* group also provided avenues of exploration for British experimental poets.⁹⁴

The crucial danger that Davie detects in British poetry which repudiated modernism as a historical phenomenon was the failure to acknowledge ‘poetry [as] only one of the arts, and that all the arts in some ways hang together...another is the perception that artistic endeavour is international, multi-ethnic and therefore, in the case of the linguistic arts, multi-lingual’.⁹⁵ Finlay’s *POTH* exemplifies a little magazine which takes on board the modernist lesson of artistic plurality. The magazine is a self-consciously visual endeavour as well as a literary one, as witnessed by both physical presentation (poems visually realised by illustrators, issues printed in a variety of sizes and formats) and content (poems frequently presented alongside photographs and woodcuts). Finlay’s commitment to showcasing Concrete poetry especially points to his belief that the distinction between poetry and art was something to be questioned, and that words themselves could be used as material for art. *POTH* also celebrates the geographic diversity of its poets by indicating their nationality in a postscript to each work.

Eric Mottram argues that the poets who came to be associated with the British Poetry Revival are ‘internationalists who [...] live and work in the variety of British culture, whose poetry is created within that range of energies’.⁹⁶ Observing that these poets were ‘deeply aware of and affected by the poetics of modernism’, he notes that little magazine editors and small press operators such as Turnbull, Stuart Montgomery (Fulcrum Press), Tom Raworth, Barry Hall, and Nathaniel Tarn (Goliard Press, later Cape-Goliard Press), published works by British modernists such as Hugh MacDiarmid and Basil Bunting alongside new works by younger British writers as Finlay and Roy Fisher, and Americans Ed Dorn and Robert Duncan.⁹⁷ The alignment of Turnbull and Finlay – among other poets and editors related by Mottram to the British Poetry Revival – to both internationalism and to ‘poetics of modernism’ can be contextualized with

⁹⁴ Ken Edwards, ‘Some Younger Poets’, in *The New British Poetry 1968-1988*, ed. by Gillian Allnutt, Fred D’Aguiar, Ken Edwards and Eric Mottram (London: Paladin Books, 1988), pp. 265-270 (p. 267).

⁹⁵ Davie, *Under Briggflatts*, p. 253.

⁹⁶ Eric Mottram, ‘A Treacherous Assault on British Poetry’, in *The New British Poets*, ed. by Gillian Allnutt, Fred D’Aguiar, Ken Edwards and Eric Mottram (London: Paladin Books, 1988), pp. 131-133 (p. 131).

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 131. See also note 119.

Raymond Williams's concept of the emergence of 'paranational' cultural formations:

By the mid-twentieth century [there developed] the institution of an effective world market in some sectors of art, music and literature, and to the corresponding (but not always dependent) sense of larger effective cultures ('European literature', 'Western music', 'Twentieth-century art') [...] The broader developments were in some ways preceded by an important new kind of cultural formation which has to be distinguished from national groups. This can be seen most readily in the development of the concept of the '*avant garde*'.⁹⁸

Williams's 'paranational' cultural formation corresponds to the activities of Casanova's 'international writer', the figure who looks to overseas literary innovations in order to counter nationalized and dominant literatures. The correlation between internationalism and avant-gardism was a common tactic taken by proponents of 'underground' literature. Donald Allen, editor of the 1960 poetry anthology *The New American Poetry*, writes in its introduction that the poets in the anthology – who he notes as having previously published exclusively in small presses and little magazines – represent members of a new American literary and artistic renaissance ('our avant-garde, the true containers of the modern movement in American poetry').⁹⁹ Allen states that the poets in the anthology share 'one common characteristic: a total rejection of all those qualities typical of academic verse', and aligns their practise with 'modern jazz and abstract painting'.¹⁰⁰ The literary value of the poetry represented in the anthology is thereby linked to a denunciation of dominant poetic practises (i.e.

⁹⁸ Raymond Williams, *Culture* (London: Fontana, 1981), p. 83.

⁹⁹ Donald Allen, 'Introduction', in *The New American Poetry*, ed. by Donald Allen (New York: Grove Press, 1960), pp. xi-xiv (p. ix). It is perhaps less problematic to align modernism with nationalism in the American context than in the British. As Lucie-Smith further elaborates in the 1985 revised introduction to the anthology, the study of modernist approaches has been integral to American poetry while it was comparatively neglected in Britain: 'the study of modernist approaches and attitudes is a necessary background to the study of classic American texts—texts which in British terms may seem too recent even to merit inclusion as part of a standard course. These differences in approach mean that the academic study of English in England maintains a distinction between the classic and the modern which no longer exists in the United States'.

Edward Lucie-Smith, p. 26.

¹⁰⁰ Allen, p. ix.

publication in larger magazines and/or adherence to literary forms endorsed by academia) as well as to an awareness of transnational cultural developments in the arts not limited to literature.

Little magazines vs. dominant poetry

British poets opposed to the dominant poetries used American examples to relate their work to experimentalism and in some cases, to avant-gardism and/or anarchism. American little magazines not only acted as transmitters of innovative poetry, but as Crozier argues, ‘provided lessons in the organisation and conduct of a poet’s public life, indicating how poets might take matters of publication and the definition of a readership into their own hands by establishing their own publishing houses and journals’.¹⁰¹ Jeff Nuttall writes in *Bomb Culture*:

The characteristic pattern [of self-publishing] was set in the United States. Since 1956 City Lights [bookshop, in San Francisco] has shown what could happen if you ignored the professional middlemen and set up in business yourself. You immediately [...] sidestepped the critics, and were your own censor. [...] Following City Lights in the late fifties came New Directions, Auerhahn, and Grove, all poet-publishers knowledgeably committed to publishing nothing but work of experiment and consequence.¹⁰²

Nuttall’s conflation of ‘experiment’ and ‘consequence’ in his appraisal of self-publishing was a common sentiment expressed by those involved in little magazine activity. For many British little magazine editors, the literary value of a work correlated to its distance from popular tastes (such as Movement poetics), and to the ostensible risks it took in form, content, and ethos. We may turn again to Bourdieu to speculate why this may have been the case. In his theory of the literary field of production, Bourdieu establishes the ‘subfield of restricted production’ as a subset within the literary field which has reached maximum autonomy. Agents operating in this subfield, Bourdieu writes, are ‘opposed to

¹⁰¹ Crozier, ‘Preface’, p. 12.

¹⁰² Jeff Nuttall, *Bomb Culture* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1968), p. 172-173.

the heteronomous sub-field as an anti-economic economy based on the refusal of commerce and 'the commercial', and, more precisely, on the renunciation of short-term economic profits [...] and on recognition solely of *symbolic, long-term profits*'.¹⁰³ The rejection of the model of literary value based on economic success and widespread recognition can therefore be understood as a hallmark of little magazine 'identity'. Bob Cobbing's explication of his little magazine *And* (1954-), which focused on sound and visual poetry, demonstrates this stance:

The poems and other writings that interest us most are unacceptable to publishers, editors, and programme planners. And at least some of the writing in this magazine is utterly unacceptable to almost everybody. That is why we put it in. It seems to us that one of the functions of a magazine that doesn't make a profit is to print stuff which is incomplete, tentative, naïve, idiosyncratic and thoroughly irritating – so long as it has enough life to stand up and answer for itself.'¹⁰⁴

Jonathan Raban's critical account of 'non-mainstream' poetry production in the 1960s similarly lends an anarchic sensibility to the little magazine project: 'The context offered by the mag is an opportunity to be yourself, to mess about, to play. [Little magazines] justly resent 'criticism' and 'standards'; since such things are wholly irrelevant to the essentially social and therapeutic functions of the mag'.¹⁰⁵ Geoffrey Soar and R.J. Ellis in a similar vein refer to the operation of the little magazine as 'autonomy in production', citing the activity as both a political statement 'against the established norm' but also as 'light relief' against the austerity of literary production generally.¹⁰⁶ In an era marked by the Vietnam War and threat of 'the bomb', many editors and critics increasingly aligned the little magazine with explicit political aims. Len Fulton, for instance, suggests that little magazines and small presses of the 1960s were part of a larger movement of artistic and social self-sufficiency which was set in defiance against twentieth

¹⁰³ Bourdieu, p. 54.

¹⁰⁴ Bob Cobbing, quoted in Jeff Nuttall, *Bomb Culture* (London: Paladin, 1970), p. 171.

¹⁰⁵ Raban, Jonathan. *The Society of the Poem* (London: Harrap, 1971), p. 179.

¹⁰⁶ Geoffrey Soar and R.J. Ellis, 'Little Magazines in British Isles Today', *British Book News* (December 1983), 728-733 (p. 732).

century warfare and industrialization.¹⁰⁷ He writes: ‘The little magazine began to acquire a new definition for itself [in the 1960s], to become an ever-changing, moving process, a string of continuous events more than a series of contained and individual issuances’.¹⁰⁸ Loss Pequeño Glazier holds a similar opinion, writing that the little magazine in the 1960s ‘was a direct protest, among other things, against hypocrisy in society and the publishers who were willing to perpetuate that hypocrisy’.¹⁰⁹ The little magazine *Poesie Vivante* (1964-1970), for example, described itself as part of a ‘new humanism integrating poetry more and more into daily life and ensuring a place for it amongst international exchanges’.¹¹⁰

Joyce Shreibman makes an important point about the role of technology in the conceptualization of the little magazine vis-à-vis dominant poetics in the early 1960s. Pointing to technological developments in word processors and printing methods, she writes: ‘These innovations have, at least in the field of production, substantially reduced the editor’s workload and thereby contributed to the survival of the concept of the little magazine as the product of a single person or a small group of people’.¹¹¹ The advance in publishing technology was therefore a key factor in enabling such poet-publishers as Cobbing and Turnbull to contest the cultural hegemony. Nuttall’s recollection of ‘swinging the duplicator handle throughout the long Saturday afternoons of 1963’¹¹² relays not only an aesthetics of resistance against professionalism – such methods often resulted in inked hands and uneven printing – but the material circumstance which enabled individuals to produce literature without having to adhere to cultural authorities or to economic imperatives. One characteristic of the little magazine in this period is limited production for individual little magazine titles. Wolfgang Görtzschacher, in his survey of self-identified little magazines from 1939 to 1993, writes that little magazines circulated at generally less than 600,

¹⁰⁷ Len Fulton, ‘Anima Rising: Little Magazines in the Sixties’, *American Libraries* 2, no. 1 (Jan 1971), 25-47, p. 26.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

¹⁰⁹ Loss Pequeño Glazier, *Small Press: An Annotated Guide* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1992), p. 2.

¹¹⁰ Fulton, p. 30.

¹¹¹ Joyce Shreibman, ‘British Poetry Magazines: A Profile (Part One)’, *Writer’s Monthly* (March 1987), 14-15 (p. 14).

¹¹² Nuttall, p. 171.

with the average production of 150 to 600 copies per issue.¹¹³ Turnbull, for example, produced around 200 copies for each issue of *Migrant*, typing the stencils on a borrowed electric typewriter and manually printed each issue on a mimeograph machine.¹¹⁴ Shreibman writes, '[Little magazines] are not the product of large organisations. They are the products of the individual, and are as varied as this implies'.¹¹⁵

The 1960s and early 1970s: A Turn of the Tide

Lucie-Smith cites the growing popularity of poetry among the young as the predominant reason why British poetry in the 1960s had taken on a more progressive and less centralised stance, and the impetus for the 'British Poetry Revival' of the 1960s and 1970s.¹¹⁶ Although an in-depth enquiry into the youth cultures of 1960s Britain is beyond the scope of this chapter, the content as well as the activities of British little magazines of the 1950s and 1960s illuminate key features of these emerging cultures.¹¹⁷ The experimentation witnessed in little magazines of the 1950s period, especially in those looking to neglected movements in art from both home and abroad, preceded many of the literary trends which became more pervasive in the 1960s. Although it is impossible to evaluate to what extent little magazines directly initiated these trends, it is a fair assessment to make that for many British poets, the little magazine was their first point of contact to writing from abroad. Charles Tomlinson for example cites Turnbull as his first introduction to the poetry of Creeley, Charles Olson, William Bronk, and William Carlos Williams.¹¹⁸ The little magazine also provided the means by which poets and publishers looking outside the dominant poetries could make contact with each other and expand their networks. Bob Cobbing's little magazine *And*, for example, sowed the seeds for the establishment of the publishing network and writer's network Writer's Forum in 1963. Ken Edwards in an essay in the 1988 anthology *The New British Poetry*

¹¹³ Wolfgang Görtzschacher, *Little Magazine Profiles: The Little Magazine in Great Britain 1939-1993* (Salzburg: University of Salzburg Press, 1993), p. 64.

¹¹⁴ Turnbull, 'Migrant – A Personal Account', p. 98.

¹¹⁵ Shreibman, p. 14.

¹¹⁶ Lucie-Smith, p. 31.

¹¹⁷ Jeff Nuttall's *Bomb Culture* gives an insightful if not exhaustive first-hand account of the activities of the sub-cultures of this period.

¹¹⁸ Tomlinson, *Some Americans*, p. 13 and p.45.

asserts that the existence of a network (at the time of his writing) which made small press books and magazines available is 'a tribute to the pioneering work of the first small press poetry publishers [...] of 20 or 30 years ago [...] the Gael Turnbulls, Stuart Montgomerys, Tom Raworths'.¹¹⁹ Eric Mottram in his essay in the same anthology adds Barry Hall and Nathaniel Tarn to the list of small press and little magazine editors who consistently published work by poets from abroad.¹²⁰

This period was marked by a proliferation of new little magazine titles. David Miller and Richard Price note in their survey of British little magazines that between 1960 and 1975, thirty-four titles (non-net) on average appeared each year, as compared to twelve each year in the period of 1950 to 1959.¹²¹ Magazines with short lifespans characterises this period of little magazine production: out of the 500 magazines established between 1960 and 1975 surveyed by Price and Miller, 80% only ran between one to four titles.¹²² Furthermore, many of these titles appeared from small towns or villages,¹²³ a fact which contests the idea that the 1960s subcultures were centred around 'Swinging London'. The 'Underground' subculture, as it came to be conceptualised, was therefore a home-grown and decentralized affair. Jeff Nuttall writes that 'the word Underground was still, in the early sixties, not yet in common use. It probably came into use in New York around 1964. Two main activities defined it, finally. Duplicated magazines and home movies.'¹²⁴

One significant development in the 1960s poetry scene was renewed interest in modernist poetry written before and during the war which did not fit the mould of popular poetry during its time. These writers included Basil Bunting (whose poetry reached wider recognition with the publication of *Briggflatts* in 1965¹²⁵), Hugh MacDiarmid (*Collected Poems*, 1962), Austin

¹¹⁹ Edwards, *The New British Poetry*, p. 266. Raworth established Matrix Press in the early 1960s and with Barry Hall, Goliard Press (later called Cape Goliard Press) in the mid-1960s. Montgomery set up Fulcrum Press in 1965; the press is perhaps best known for publishing Bunting's *Briggflatts* (1965).

¹²⁰ Mottram, 'A Treacherous Assault', p. 131. Tarn set up Cape Goliard Press with Raworth and Hall in the late 1960s.

¹²¹ Miller and Price, p. 122.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 124.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ Nuttall, p. 175.

¹²⁵ The collection of poems following the poet refers to the publication which brought the poet wider recognition.

Clarke (*Later Poems*, 1961), and Keith Douglas (who was writing before the war but died in combat, and whose poems were not easily obtainable until *Selected Poems*, 1965).¹²⁶ Mottram, assessing the ‘poets who began writing in the British Poetry Revival of the 1960s and 1970s’ (he includes Turnbull and Finlay in this grouping), writes that these poets regarded as their literary exemplars ‘Hugh MacDiarmid, Basil Bunting – all poets deeply aware of and affected by the poetics of modernism’.¹²⁷

Another development in British poetry after the war was increased output of new English translations of poetry in other languages. Translations by such poets as Michael Hamburger, Christopher Middleton, and Edwin Morgan marked a new appreciation for international poetry both historical and contemporary, particularly from Germany and Russia. *POTH* contained poems, translated and untranslated (in the case of several Concrete poems), originally written in French, Finnish, Japanese, and Portuguese. Miller and Price’s little magazine survey between 1960 and 1975 show that the publication of European poetry in translation more than doubled their yearly rate across the period compared with the 1950s.¹²⁸ *Lines Review*, which had exclusively published new Scottish poetry and reviews, in the 1960s began to publish works by English, European, and American authors. Yet another trend was more visibility of translations of works from ancient and contemporary sub-cultures. Larkin’s statement that ‘the whole of the ancient world, the whole of classical and biblical mythology means very little [and] using them today not only fills poems full of dead spots but dodges the writer’s duty to be original’¹²⁹ was being actively challenged by small press publications and small magazines. These included C.H. Sisson’s poetry collection *The London Zoo* (1961), George Mackay Brown’s collection *Loaves and Fishes* (1959), and the little magazines *Ore* (1954-1995), *Prospect* (1959-1964), and *Agenda* (1959-), all of which in various ways engaged with ancient mythologies.

¹²⁶ Tomlinson praises Douglas for his ‘...refusal to force himself into stylistic neatness (which in effect was the attempt of many of the poets of the fifties’.
Charles Tomlinson, ‘Some Aspects of Poetry Since the War,’ in *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature*, ed. Boris Ford (Harmondworth: Penguin, 1983), pp. 450-470 (p. 462).

¹²⁷ Mottram, ‘A Treacherous Assault’, p. 131.

¹²⁸ Miller and Price, pp. 123-124.

¹²⁹ Philip Larkin, quoted in Tomlinson, ‘Some Aspects’, p. 451.

By 1967, the landscape of British poetry had altered dramatically. If Movement poetry had inundated the literary market in the 1950s at the expense of other poetries, the 1960s poetry scene was characterised by increased accessibility to diverse poetic forms. For some critics, the pendulum had swung too far in the direction of cultural dispersal and distraction. Stephen Spender for instance wrote in the *Time Literary Supplement* in 1967 that the centre of poetic activity had shifted from London to New York to San Francisco, and that ‘the English poet easily finds himself in the position of having to become – at a disadvantage – an American poet’.¹³⁰ Spender’s observation demonstrates the burgeoning rejection by British poetry audiences in the 1960s of nationalistic and hieratic poetics. Thanks in part to little magazines as *Migrant* and *POTH*, but without doubt also due the advent of television, commercialization of ‘alternative cultures’, and the rise of American cultural capital, the British poetry scene in the 1960s was marked by an increased awareness of developments in American writing, arts, and music such as Beat poetry, jazz, rock n’ roll, and spoken word poetry.

¹³⁰ Stephen Spender, quoted in in Lucie-Smith, p. 28.

Chapter 2- *Migrant*: Social and historical contexts

The Oxford English Dictionary defines ‘migrant’ as ‘a person who moves temporarily or seasonally from place to place; a person on a journey’. The word is also connotative of work: ‘a migrant worker who travels and makes a temporary home in the place of his employment’.¹³¹ It is possible to interpret Gael Turnbull’s choice of title for his little magazine within his own migratory narrative, having relocated between Britain and North America no less than six times between 1939 and 1964. As a general practitioner of medicine, and later as an anesthetist, Turnbull’s residences were often dictated by where he could find employment. Wars were another factor: as a pacifist, Turnbull was compelled to move from the United States, to Canada and England, to avoid conscription in the Korean War and the Vietnam War. Correspondence with his family indicates that his frequent migrations instilled in Turnbull a sense of being, in his own words, a ‘displaced person’. This self-identification as a nomad and perennial outsider allowed Turnbull to be particularly attuned to the ways in which nationalism shapes self-identities, as well as to the ways in which literary creation and reception of literary work are affected. The history of *Migrant* is therefore irrevocably tied to the trajectory of Turnbull’s migrations, and to the various literary connections he made during these relocations.

This chapter, drawing on published accounts and Turnbull’s personal letters, investigates *Migrant* as a unique site of literary exchange which created an indispensable link between British and American poetry. If Turnbull sought to elaborate one concern in *Migrant*, it was to contest the insular and nationalistic perceptions of poetic activity which he believed limited possibilities for engagement between schools or movements of literature. A pamphlet entitled ‘Migrant Press: Bibliographic History’ describes the magazine as ‘partly a counter to the sometimes excessively national focus of those Americans whose writing [Turnbull] valued, and partly a means of keeping an English taproot. It appeared bimonthly with a small but vital circulation about equally on both sides of the Atlantic.’¹³² Here *Migrant* is announced directly as a challenge to nationalism’s monolithic influence upon writing and writing identities. Another

¹³¹ ‘migrant.’ OED Online, March 2012, Oxford University Press, <<http://dictionary.oed.com/>>

¹³² ‘Migrant Press: Bibliographic History’ (Birmingham: Migrant Press, 1965).

motivation behind the magazine's publication – as a means for Turnbull to keep abreast of poetic activity in Britain whilst residing in North America – indicates a desire to create a context for a poetic community despite of (or even, due to) physical distance. *Migrant* is a continuation and expansion of Turnbull's literary friendships, which were maintained primarily through extensive mail correspondence with poets in North America and Britain. The relatively small circulation of around 200 copies per issue made feasible the creation of a viable transatlantic poetry community, which I will suggest was modeled after Turnbull's friendship with Michael Shayer, the British editor of *Migrant*.

A series of migrations: Turnbull in North America and Britain

Turnbull was born in Edinburgh in 1928. Soon after, his father, a Scottish Baptist minister, relocated the family to Jarrow, and then to Blackpool in 1934. At the outbreak of World War II in 1939, his family emigrated to the farming town of Dassel, Minnesota, then to Winnipeg, Canada in 1940. A letter written to his father in the spring of 1944, during his first long-distance solo trip (taken to Washington, D.C.), gives some indication that for the 16-year old Turnbull, national identity was something to be negotiated rather than taken for granted:

To continue about my comming [sic] out. I did not really want to leave [Britain], in a way, although I was really excited too. When I got over here, I went around with a chip on my shoulder. I wanted to make a little world of my own. Hoist the Union Jack, say 'This house & garden is British Terretory [sic] so 'Rule Brittania' etc., if you see what I mean. It wasn't as direct as that, of course, but you see my idea. When we went up to Canada I formd [sic] it more to my liking and learned to give and take a little. Now I get along all-right, as you know.¹³³

For the young Turnbull, being an outsider (i.e. British) in North America was aligned with a sense of indignity as well as independence. In the autumn of 1944, Turnbull returned to Britain to attend the Perse School, then later Cambridge

¹³³ Gael Turnbull, letter to Ralph Turnbull, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Gael Turnbull Collection, Acc. 12754, fol. 2

University to study medicine. There he befriended Michael Shayer, whose epistolary friendship with Turnbull, as I will demonstrate in the next section, served as a model for *Migrant*.

In 1947 Turnbull moved to Philadelphia to attend medical school at the University of Pennsylvania. Shayer, who had eventual plans to study English at Harvard University, joined him there, and together they became involved in the downtown arts scene based at 'The Heel', which Shayer describes as 'very much like a Parisian café...[there] were people who played in the Philadelphia orchestra, people who were interested in poetry, people who were interested in literature.'¹³⁴ Philadelphia's literary scene impressed Turnbull—who at this time, according to Shayer, was writing poetry at a prolific rate—as a possibility for a creative social community, much in contrast to the general feeling of alienation he experienced at the medical school at the University of Pennsylvania. In a letter to his sister Esther in 1951, he recounts his meeting with a French student of English literature at the university, Pierre Delattre (whose work would appear in the first issue of *Migrant*), with whom he felt 'immediate kinship [because] he has an "air" of "being not of the crowd" [... and of] wanting to write and feeling he belongs to no country.' Turnbull speculates over why he feels more comfortable around Delattre than with his medical colleagues and mentors, and concludes that it is because they share a "'displaced person" history [...]—and when I talk to [him] I realize how much such a background counts.'¹³⁵

Turnbull's conviction of American national insularity was likely shaped by his experiences in Philadelphia. His correspondence with his family during this period evidence discomfort over American attitudes to international politics. In a letter to his sister in 1951, Turnbull recalls attending a debate between two senators about US foreign policies, and being surprised over the 'obviously pro-administration feeling of the audience.' In another letter to his sister in 1951, he is critical of the American idea of 'going to Europe', commenting, '[O]ne could take a summer trip to Paris (over-run by Americans) and come back as safely

¹³⁴ 'Michael Shayer Interviewed by Richard Price', *PS 1* [Prose supplement to *Painted, Spoken*] (2006), 15-32 (pp. 17-18). In the same interview, Shayer remarks that he and Turnbull attended a poetry reading by e.e.cummings where 'he sneer[ed] at *My Country 'Tis of Thee*'. (p. 17.) Shayer returned to Britain in 1953.

¹³⁵ Gael Turnbull, letter to Esther Turnbull, MS Gael Turnbull Collection, Acc. 12754, fol. 8. All letters written by GT in 1951 are from this source.

insulated from any new experience as if one had only been to a mediocre movie about the Eiffel Tower.’ He continues:

What one wants is not mere novelty either—but a closer contact with something different and other than what one has become accustomed to. Only by these (sometimes bitter, sometimes humiliating) encounters with people & places does one increase that store of knowledge that is oneself. Hence the Heel. Yet the Heel is not a finality either. The vast majority of people are afraid (yes, utterly frightened) of anything that might jerk them out of their expected responses, and easy assumptions of what is where and why.

If Turnbull felt that he detected arrogant complacency in Americans regarding their political and social position to the world, his first exposure to William Carlos Williams – in his introduction to the *Collected Later Poems* – relayed to him a sense of literary nationalism bordering on belligerence: ‘Though born in Scotland and with a transatlantic accent, I identified myself as somehow ‘English’. His stance seemed to me to be aggressively ‘anti-English’. I was immediately put off. If that was his ‘line’ then it obviously excluded me. I shut the book with a sense of irritation. Why drag ‘nationality’ into poetry?’¹³⁶ Later, probably in the mid to late 1950s, Turnbull came to appreciate Williams’s poetic design: ‘Suddenly I came to understand his intense preoccupation with being American. What had seemed narrow at first encounter did not seem to be that anymore. His sense and use of the ‘local’ was not constricting but liberating. It is true, his way of articulating this was not always helpful for anyone outside his situation.’¹³⁷

By the time he graduated from medical school in 1951, Turnbull had begun to develop a network of literary acquaintances. On the eve of moving to Pittsburgh from Philadelphia to begin his medical internship, he wrote to his parents of ‘beginning to “cultivate” some more “interesting” people – a new circle – this time more “literary” – one a friend of Ezra Pound’s, another actually making some steady money on poetry he writes – of course, not necessarily of

¹³⁶ Gael Turnbull, ‘Charlotte Chapel, The Pittsburgh Draft Board and *Some Americans*’, *PN Review* 28, Volume 9, Number 2 (November/December 1982), 8-12 (p. 9).

¹³⁷ Ibid.

any more value as human beings – but quite interesting to me who had been so shy [...]’ Resistance to assigning instant celebrity or value-status on poets – and his self-conscious enthusiasm for literary possibility – are recurring themes in the letters to family members during this period. Perhaps Turnbull felt that he was unable to whole-heartedly pursue literary endeavours because of his burgeoning medical career, over which he expressed considerable apprehension in terms of the stress and alienation he experienced. Despite his self-professed reservation over literary ‘networking’, however, Turnbull increasingly continued to garner friendships with poets and writers. These were primarily conducted through the mail, for in 1952, he and his first wife Jonnie, whom he married that year, relocated to a remote logging camp in Iroquois Falls, Northern Ontario, where Turnbull would work as a general practitioner for three years.

Turnbull’s first published poems appeared in the Canadian magazine *Northern Review* (1945-1956) in 1953. Impressed by the output, poet Raymond Souster, who ran the magazine *Contact* (1952-1954) and a small press of the same name, wrote to Turnbull, and they began a correspondence. Remarking on this immediate and positive feedback, Turnbull wrote, ‘The consequences of this first real publication were considerable. I was confirmed in my mistaken impression that one only had to publish poems for them to be read and remarked upon. Only later did I learn how rare this is.’¹³⁸ Several of Turnbull’s poems were published in the spring 1953 issue of *Contact*, and through Contact Press, Turnbull’s co-translations of works by the Francophone Quebec poets Hector de Saint Denys-Garneau and Roland Guiguere, were also published. Phyllis Webb, whose works also appeared in the same issue of *Contact*, writes that ‘Gael had quickly and astutely diagnosed the need for more communication between French-speaking and English-speaking writers in Canada and set out to remedy the situation.’¹³⁹ Turnbull’s interest in disseminating translated works wasn’t limited to works in French. In a letter to his sister dated May of 1953, Turnbull’s enthusiasm for English translations of international poetry is evident:

¹³⁸ Gael Turnbull, ‘Gael Turnbull’, in *Contemporary Authors Autobiography Series* (Detroit, Mich.: Gale, 1991) pp. 321-337 (p. 333).

¹³⁹ Phyllis Webb, ‘Air, Air’, in *A Gathering for Gael Turnbull*, ed. by Peter McCarey (Glasgow: Au Quai, 1998), no pagination.

Future issues [of *Contact*] will have translations from the Austrian Georg Trakl – past issues have featured Mexican and German poets – [...] I am working on a “contact” in England to drum up some interest there – hope to get some translations from the Japanese from a G.S. Fraser – and from the Greek by another poet – it’s fun “stirring things up”[.]¹⁴⁰

In the same letter, he encourages his sister, who was at that time studying French at university, to send Souster translations of Cocteau, presumably to be published in *Contact*. He concludes the letter: ‘You see, I’m determined to have you as a permanent “contact”, to contribute what you can [...] and learn by doing[.]’ The making available of hitherto inaccessible poetry through translation is here connected to the idea of poetry as pedagogical activity within a self-fashioned artistic community. ‘Learn by doing’ underlines the development of Turnbull’s valuation of poetry which imparts, as he notes in this letter to his sister, ‘cogency of an individual in a living situation’.

Through Souster, Turnbull was put in touch with Cid Corman, editor of the little magazine *Origin* (1954-1957, then irregularly until 1984). In a 1953 letter to his sister, he writes, ‘[Corman] edits a rather exclusive magazine (prints W.C. Williams & friends) – has given me many fruitful criticisms – may use a poem or two of mine in a future issue of *Origin* – which would be a feather in my ego (what mixed metaphors!!!)’ Turnbull’s poems appeared in *Origin* in the spring 1954 issue, alongside poems by Robert Creeley, William Carlos Williams, Robert Duncan, and Charles Olson.¹⁴¹ That year Turnbull began correspondences with poets in Corman’s circle. Creeley, who was at this time editing *Black Mountain Review* (1954-1957), in particular was an important contact for Turnbull, both in terms of his influence on Turnbull’s poetic craft, and his conception of the little magazine as a necessary artistic contrivance. *Black Mountain Review*, like *Origin*, published work by poets such as Corman, Duncan, Olson, among others, with the addition of critical essays and reproductions of contemporary art by artists such as Franz Kline. Noting that ‘to be published in the *Kenyon Review* was too much like being “tapped” for a

¹⁴⁰ Gael Turnbull, letter to Esther Turnbull, MS Gael Turnbull Collection, Acc. 12754, fol. 10. All letters written by Turnbull in 1953 are from this source.

¹⁴¹ Corman’s Origin Press also published Turnbull’s first book of poems, *Bjarni Spike-Helgi and other poems*, in 1956.

fraternity', Creeley established the *Black Mountain Review* with the intent to 'make evident what we, as writers, had found to be significant, both for ourselves and for that world – no doubt vague to us indeed – we hoped our writing would enter'. Creeley further noted that 'We felt, all of us, a great distance from the more conventional magazines of that time. Either they were dominated by the New Critics, with whom we could have no relation, or else they were so general in character that no active centre of coherence was possible'.¹⁴²

Turnbull's introduction to Souster, Corman, and Creeley's contacts – and to the sense of 'we' which he uses – no doubt played a significant role in Turnbull's conceptualisation of the little magazine as a valuable opportunity to 'learn by doing', and as a way to coalesce the work of a variety of poets, from Britain and North America, established and unknown. By 1957, when he guest edited the last issue of *Origin*, Turnbull's literary network had considerably expanded; in the issue he published the work of relatively unknown English poets Roy Fisher and Alan Brownjohn.¹⁴³ He also solicited work from Philip Larkin, whom he considered, according to Fisher recollecting the occasion in an interview with John Tranter in *Jacket* magazine, 'not typical of the English and also obviously very good'.¹⁴⁴ Larkin's poetry, however, did not appear in the magazine. As Fisher notes, '[Larkin] opened [*Origin*] and – I don't know whether it was the impact of what he read, or the fact that his book was coming out shortly – he sent by registered post a countermand to withdraw all his material. So he wasn't published along with Irving Layton and Charles Olson and Larry Eigner and untidy people like that.'¹⁴⁵ Fisher's attitude towards Larkin may be guarded, but Turnbull remained consistently vocal about his admiration for the poet who was widely associated with Movement poetry. Responding to a statement made by the 'British avant-garde' little magazine *English Intelligencer* (1966-1968) that the magazine was intended 'for the island and its language, to circulate as quickly as needs be', Turnbull writes: 'I hope this island *doesn't* have a language, in a sense – I must confess that I admire many of Philip

¹⁴² Robert Creeley, 'On *Black Mountain Review*', in *The Little Magazine in America: A Modern Documentary History*, ed. by Elliott Anderson and Mary Kinzie (Yonkers: Pushcart Press, 1978), pp. 248-261 (p. 249).

¹⁴³ Richard Price, 'Migrant the Magnificent', *PN Review* 174 (March-April 2007), 29-33 (p. 30).

¹⁴⁴ Roy Fisher, 'Roy Fisher in Interview with John Tranter', *Jacket* 1 (December 2001), <http://jacketmagazine.com/01/fisher-iv.html>

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

Larkin's poems'.¹⁴⁶ Turnbull's wish not to comply with partisan poetry politics is reflected in *Migrant*: in 1960 Turnbull published a piece by Alan Brownjohn in *Migrant* in which Creeley and Larkin are given complimentary attributes.

Turnbull moved to London in 1955, and a year later to Worcester, where he found work as an anaesthetist. Late in 1956, with the help of the mailing list of *The Poet* (1952 - 1956), W. Price Turner's little magazine based in Glasgow, he established Migrant Books as a distribution scheme to introduce and circulate poetry books by his North American friends. These books included titles published by Origin Press, Divers Press (Creeley's imprint), and Jargon Books (the imprint of Jonathan Williams, a photography student at Black Mountain College). Except for appearances in several British little magazines such as *The Poet*, *The Window* (edited by John Sankey and running from 1950 to 1956), and *Artisan* (edited by Robert Cooper, running from 1953 to 1955), the North American poets Migrant Press promoted, such as Cid Corman, Ed Dorn, and Creeley, were relatively unknown in Britain – although they had begun to garner critical attention in North America.¹⁴⁷ In the summer of 1957 Migrant Press published its first book *The Whip*, a selection of Creeley's poems, with the help of Jonathan Williams and Contact Press. Plans were also made to publish Charles Olson's 'O'Ryan' sequence of poems, but this never came to fruition.

Turnbull's residence in Britain from 1955 to 1958 was occupied by numerous meetings and correspondences with poets, many of whom would later contribute to *Migrant* and/or Migrant Press. American poet Louis Zukofsky, who would come to be known as one of the initiators of Objectivist poetry, paid Turnbull a visit in 1957. A year earlier in 1956, Turnbull sought out Basil Bunting in Newcastle, whose work in *Poems 1950* he had transcribed into his 'commonplace book'¹⁴⁸ in the early 1950s whilst residing in the U.S. Bunting, whose work had been acknowledged as major achievement of Modernist poetry in the 1930s, was in the late 1950s relatively unknown in Britain; it wasn't until the publication of his long poem *Briggflatts* (published first in the U.S.) that he

¹⁴⁶ 'Letter to *The English Intelligencer*', reprinted in Gael Turnbull, *More Words: Gael Turnbull on Poets & Poetry*, ed. by Jill Turnbull and Hamish Whyte (Bristol: Shearsman, 2012), pp. 163-164 (p. 164).

¹⁴⁷ Richard Price notes that Migrant Press's distribution of Charles Olson's *Maximus Poems* was one of the Press's most significant projects, as Olson had virtually no British distributor until Turnbull's intercession. (Price, 'Migrant the Magnificent', p. 30)

¹⁴⁸ Price explains this as Turnbull's 'notebook into which he would copy interesting poems he liked and [...] would show [to] fellow poets'. (Ibid.)

received wider recognition in his native Britain. Turnbull also met Roy Fisher around this time; Turnbull's 'commonplace book' was Fisher's first point of initiation to Williams Carlos Williams, Creeley, Olson, Bunting, Zukofsky, Ray Souster, Larry Eigner, and Denise Levertov. Charles Tomlinson in his memoir *Some Americans* similarly cites Turnbull as one of his first introductions to the poetry of Creeley, Olson, Williams, and William Bronk.¹⁴⁹ Turnbull, who had initiated a correspondence with Tomlinson in 1956 after reading his first collection of poetry, *The Necklace*, sent Tomlinson copies of Williams's work, which according to Turnbull were difficult to obtain in Britain at this time.¹⁵⁰ If the 1950s in Britain was marked by an atmosphere of literary insularity, Turnbull and his distribution press served as a crucial nexus between experimental North American and British poets.

The production of *Migrant*: Turnbull and Shayer

In 1958 Turnbull relocated to Ventura, California, where he was offered a position of anaesthesiologist at the Ventura County Hospital. According to Jonnie Turnbull in an interview with Richard Price, Turnbull was at this time regularly receiving little magazines from the U.S., Canada, Britain, France, and Japan, as well as maintaining correspondence with many poet-friends from these places. Jonnie Turnbull notes that

It was as a result of this correspondence, and encouraged by Roy Fisher and Michael Shayer in England, that Gael had decided to start up *Migrant*. The idea was to cross-fertilize poetry, to encourage English-speaking poets in Britain, Canada and the US, in particular, to read each other's work.¹⁵¹

Turnbull's decision to start his own little magazine may also have been motivated by the closing of several little magazines which he had contributed,

¹⁴⁹ Charles Tomlinson, *Some Americans: A Personal Record* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), p. 13 and p. 45.

¹⁵⁰ Turnbull, 'Charlotte Chapel', p. 11.

¹⁵¹ Jonnie Turnbull, 'The Migrant Years', in *PS 1* [Prose supplement to *Painted, Spoken*] (2006), 6-14 (p. 8).

including *Black Mountain Review* and *Origin* in 1957.¹⁵² In an account of *Migrant* in 1981, Turnbull credited the little magazines *Contact* and *The Artisan* for influencing *Migrant*, ‘both in regard to writers and type of material, and in regard to general ‘atmosphere’.¹⁵³

The first issue of *Migrant* was printed in July 1959 on a Sears Roebuck hand-operated rotary duplicator; all seven successive issues were printed by the same method. According to Jonnie Turnbull, the mimeography machine was, in more than one way, a difficult machine to control, which lead to the irregularities between each copy. She recalls: ‘It was impossible to keep your fingers from getting inky; so besides the ink-smears, black finger-prints inevitably appeared on some pages. The ink also came too freely through some of the letters on the stencil because they’d been typed too vigorously. This made the final, printed result often uneven – letters in some words too black and splotchy, too faint in others.’¹⁵⁴ Turnbull’s decision to use a mimeograph to print his little magazine was an anomaly in this period for little magazine publications in the U.S. Loss Pequeño Glazier notes that of the three methods used by most little magazine publishers in the U.S. – the mimeograph, off-set, and letterpress – only 5% of little magazines were printed via mimeography in 1960.¹⁵⁵ The fact that Turnbull purchased his mimeograph machine in a second-hand shop attests to the fact that in 1959, the so-called ‘Mimeo Revolution’ – the term used to describe the sudden flux of independently published poetry books and little magazines between 1960 and 1980¹⁵⁶ – in the U.S. was a misnomer, and that for most little magazine publishers, the mimeograph machine was more a symbol of self-sufficiency rather than reflecting the actual means of production. Len Fulton writes, ‘[Mimeography] emphasized the process of literary production, experiments with form (colour, format, presentation of text), and a sense of urgency. All of these required control of literary production; hence, the spirit of

¹⁵² Price, ‘Migrant the Magnificent’, p. 30.

¹⁵³ Gael Turnbull, ‘Migrant- A Personal Account’, *Credences* 2/3, volume 1(1981/82), 97-99. (p. 97).

¹⁵⁴ Jonnie Turnbull, p. 7.

¹⁵⁵ Loss Pequeño Glazier, *Small Press: An Annotated Guide* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1992), p. 3.

¹⁵⁶ This time frame is taken from what is widely acknowledged as the sourcebook for mimeographed magazines, *A Secret Location on the Lower East Side: Adventures in Writing, 1960-1980*, by Steven Clay and Rodney Phillips (1998).

mimeo made it natural for the personae of poet, editor, and publisher to merge.¹⁵⁷

Migrant is understated in its appearance, with the text having a typewritten print (the original ‘stencils’ were keyed on a typewriter). Apart from the professionally printed covers, which bear only the name of the magazine on light blue card, Turnbull, often assisted by Jonnie, printed and assembled the magazine by hand. Unlike the *Evergreen Review* (1957 - 1973), for example, another publication associated with the Mimeo Revolution, *Migrant* offers no stylized cover, printed no graphics or art, and did not advertise its contents on its front page. The magazine was free of charge, and existed, in Turnbull’s words, ‘primarily for a group of friends’, though anyone was welcome to subscribe.¹⁵⁸ ‘Subscription is by donation,’ the table of contents page states, ‘even a few stamps will be of help; or just a postcard to indicate that you would like to receive it regularly.’ The few hundred copies of *Migrant* printed for each issue were mailed to Turnbull’s and Shayer’s contacts in the U.S., Canada, England, Scotland, and a few elsewhere. Such an approach to circulation was common for little magazines, though just as many charged a small fee, presumably to cover printing costs. According to Wolfgang Görtzschacher, ‘The medium’s voluntary marginality in the literary market seems to be inscribed in the basic premises of its existence: its disregard of economic profit, its editor’s desire to be completely independent, its relatively small circulation, its tight budget, and [...] in the case of several magazines [reflects] its functioning as a circular of communication for a restricted group of writers’.^{159 160}

¹⁵⁷ Len Fulton, ‘Anima Rising: Little Magazines in the Sixties’, *American Libraries* 2, no. 1 (Jan 1971), 25-47, p. 39.

¹⁵⁸ Audrey Holt, ‘“Anesthesiologist Reads Works Tonight”: Medicine, Poetry, Dual Career’, *The Ventura County Star-Free Press*, 20 June 1961, p. 6.

¹⁵⁹ Wolfgang Görtzschacher, ‘Putting the Record Straight: The Little Magazines and Literary History’, in *Poetry Now: Contemporary British and Irish Poetry in the Making*, ed. by Holger Klein, Sabine Coelsch-Foisner, and Wolfgang Görtzschacher (Tübingen: Stauffenburg Verlag, 1999), pp. 343-353 (p. 351).

¹⁶⁰ Another little magazine not available for sale in stores and distributed solely through a mailing list was the American magazine *Floating Bear* (1961-1971), edited by Diane di Prima and LeRoi Jones. Jed Birmingham’s account gives a flavour of privately circulated little magazine through the eyes of a contemporary collector: ‘Many copies were stained or poorly mimeo’d, but that is a large part of the charm of *Floating Bear*. You can see that these magazines were used. They were argued over, read aloud, passed around [...] *Floating Bear* could not be bought over the counter and was distributed through a mailing list. Receiving a copy meant you were part of a literary and artistic community [...] This is proven by the address labels on my copies.’

Turnbull's decision to circulate the magazine privately and in limited numbers was supported by Shayer, whom Turnbull appointed its British editor. On 23 July, 1959, Shayer wrote to Turnbull: 'I am sure that if we find what we really want to say and really want to hear and DON'T COMPETE, the word will get around'.¹⁶¹ Shayer worries here that any cues taken from the marketplace would corrupt *Migrant's* ethos. On 1 October 1959, Shayer wrote to Turnbull:

[...] in response to ads being put in [*Migrant*]. [It] doesn't fit in the particular conversation *Migrant* is, and also because I'm not interested in poetry in the same sense which [poet Alec] Craig means it [...] It is from a feeling that *Migrant* isn't addressed to poets, but to human beings. I['d be more inclined to puff some obscure film or tele[vision] programme if the impulse came to me than to something so part of the conventional world of literature.

Shayer's objections to printing advertisements in *Migrant*, presumably promoting other little magazines or small presses, not only relates to his reluctance to see the magazine associated with the marketplace, but discloses his belief that relating exclusively to poets would somehow nudge the magazine closer to the 'conventional' rather than the 'experimental' register which he had envisioned for it. In a letter to Turnbull, then residing in California, on 24 November 1959, Shayer wrote: 'Som[e]one wrote to me, reading *Migrant* is like being an eavesdropper [o]n a private conversation[.] My feeling is that it should be kept that way – anyone [...] can join in – until such a time as it is pulled into the marketplace (this is what I was after in speaking of not wanting [*Migrant*] on sale in bookstores.)' Paradoxically, both Shayer and Turnbull expressed in their correspondence with each other their aim for *Migrant* to have a wider audience than themselves and the poets they were published; the lingering question seemed to be who would constitute this wider readership.

Shayer's prolific correspondence with Turnbull during the fourteen months of *Migrant's* run, in which they discussed all aspects of the magazine,

Jed Birmingham, 'Floating Bear', Reality Studio: A William S. Burroughs Community, <http://realitystudio.org/bibliographic-bunker/floating-bear/>.

¹⁶¹ Michael Shayer, letter to Gael Turnbull, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Gael Turnbull Collection, Acc. 12551, fol. 1. All letters from Shayer to Turnbull are from this source.

from its ethical motivations to the more practical aspects of printing and circulation, offers a revealing insight into its production. Several of Shayer's letters to Turnbull were in fact incorporated into the contents of *Migrant* itself, after some editing by Turnbull. The letter excerpts were published anonymously; also printed were Turnbull's transcription of Shayer's 'audio-letters', which Shayer recorded on an earlier prototype of the cassette.¹⁶² Shayer's role as joint-editor included collecting material from British poets for inclusion in the magazine – it was he who first received work from Edwin Morgan and Ian Hamilton Finlay and relayed them to Turnbull. His other duties included canvassing subscriptions for *Migrant* by sending copies of the magazine to various writers whom he had encountered in little magazines, many of which were obtained from Better Books in London.¹⁶³ The editing of the magazine, from selecting the pieces to the setting of the layout, was entirely left to Turnbull's discretion, although he did seek advice from Shayer.¹⁶⁴ However, *Migrant*'s characteristic style – its apparent ambivalence to partisan literary politics, and emphasis on openness to international poetry and to the aesthetic differences between them – very much reflects the tone and topics of Shayer's and Turnbull's conversations. The magazine thus makes public, via print and circulation, a private (albeit edited) correspondence between them; hence Shayer's reference to the magazine as 'a private conversation' with which 'anyone [...] can join in'.

One concern explored in *Migrant* is the factionalism which the editors noted within the poetry world, and how these divisions could potentially affect both the input and output of work. In the first issue, an 'anonymous' letter was printed censuring the exclusivity of English writers following the 'club process of writing' as initiated by T.S. Eliot. The text was in fact an edited version of a

¹⁶² Price, 'Migrant the Magnificent', p. 31.

¹⁶³ Robert Sheppard writes that Better Books was 'an important venue for London readings and an unofficial resource centre' which enabled personal contacts to be made between poets working outside of the 'mainstream' publishing context in Britain. Robert Sheppard, 'British Poetry and its Discontents', in *Cultural Revolution? The Challenge of the Arts in the 1960s*, ed. by Bart Moore-Gilbert and John Seed (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 160-180 (p. 166).

¹⁶⁴ Many of Shayer's letters to Turnbull in this period give evidence to the fact that drafts of the issues were not made available to Shayer before they were published. In one letter, dated, July 24, 1959, Shayer displays acute embarrassment over the fact that Turnbull had printed one of his letters: 'How I would like to tidy them up and make them look right so no one would see I haven't a proper sense of the objective historical and cultural situation.'

letter which Shayer had written to Turnbull in early 1959. Although the letter attacked the elitism of writers specifically related to the ‘high literary’ publications of the 1950s in Britain such as *New Statesman*, *Encounter*, and *Listener*, another letter written by Shayer to Turnbull, most likely from 1959 or 1960 and not published in the magazine, reveals that his admonishment for ‘club’ writing was not reserved for those who had achieved commercial fame:

You know I respect both [Jonathan] Williams and [Raymond] Souster for their publishing activities. But there is something in both of them which has to be called corruption. Souster says to me ‘What do I think the relation of *Combustion* to the bigger mags [and] publishing houses? I hope that I make clear that we are the mortal enemies of these blood-suckers!’ I realise that without making use of this attitude neither of them might have been able to keep going. Nevertheless, it is the old gang-warfare, black and white, us and them business which is self-defeating in the long run. Nothing short of openness in all directions will do – to be sure, the tension of trying to keep channels open can seem intolerable. But this is the essential challenge of life, I think.

Shayer’s letter reflects the propensity of self-affiliated ‘non-mainstream’ poets to villainize poets of the ‘main-stream’.¹⁶⁵ Certainly much of the activity undertaken by the small presses in this period was a measure to address the problem of exclusion from the commercial publishing networks. It is interesting to speculate, however, the extent to which these proclaimed antagonisms, and attempts on the part of the ‘non-mainstream’ to distance themselves from the so-called stream, had been subsumed into the culture of marketing, and the promotion of ‘alternative’ poetry as a desirable consumer product.

¹⁶⁵ Peter Riley echoes these statements when he asserts, ‘If there’s a ‘need to ghettoise poetry’ in this country, well, no one has done more ghettoising than the poets themselves [...] We opted for little enclaves, small presses, little magazines, tiny circuits feeding off themselves, closed markets. [...] There were various kinds of despal of the public field around with many different motivations, from high-catholic intellectuality to underdog resentment.’

Peter Riley, quoted in Ken Edwards, ‘The Two Poetries’, *Angelaki Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, Volume 5, no. 1 (April 2000), 25- 37 (p. 26).

For Turnbull, the image of the ‘beatnik’ was very much an empty gesture, an opinion he expressed in an interview with a local Ventura newspaper which established Turnbull’s poetic endeavours as antithetical to the promotion of artistic and literary unconventionality.¹⁶⁶ Peter Middleton’s recent assessment of poetry which is marketed as ‘novelty’ is pertinent here: ‘[The] idea of make it new in poetry [...] is mostly a celebration of the endlessly renewing libidinal investment in consumption. Avant-gardism can easily descend into this.’¹⁶⁷ *Evergreen Review* is an example of this trend. The magazine, which gained notoriety for publishing the first collection of work by the ‘Beats’ in its 1957 ‘The San Francisco Scene’ issue, thereafter prided itself for publishing ‘writing [...] literally counter to the culture’.¹⁶⁸ Yet by the 1960s the magazine had a subscription list of 40,000 paying members, a fact which has led Jed Birmingham to pejoratively christen the magazine ‘the *Reader’s Digest* of the Mimeo Revolution [...] involving] sanitizing, condensing, and processing.’¹⁶⁹ This suggests perhaps the extent to which even the so-called avant-garde press had taken advantage of the marketability of the ‘alternative’ in the cultural milieu in which *Migrant* was published. As Herbert Marcuse writes, ‘Modes of protest and transcendence are no longer contradictory to the status quo [...] They [...] are quickly digested by the status quo as part of its healthy diet.’¹⁷⁰

Another issue which concerned Shayer in his letters to Turnbull, and subsequently explored in *Migrant*, was the effect of nationality upon authorial subjectivity. In a letter dated 26 February, 1960, Shayer wrote:

It is a paradox: on the one hand, nationality cannot be believed in anymore; on the other, one can only be fully human, [one’s] writing can only be of interest, if it is written out of a full sense of the complex individuality of [one’s] country or the part of the country one has become human in.

¹⁶⁶ Holt, p. 6.

¹⁶⁷ Peter Middleton, ‘Editing an Anthology of Contemporary UK Poetry for *Talisman*’, in *Poetry Now: Contemporary British and Irish Poetry in the Making* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg Verlag, 1999), pp. 389-405 (394).

¹⁶⁸ ‘Overview’, *Evergreen Review Online*, <http://evergreen.com>.

¹⁶⁹ Jed Birmingham, ‘Evergreen Review Archive: Jed Birmingham on William S. Burroughs Collecting’, *Reality Studio: A William S. Burroughs Community*, <http://realitystudio.org/bibliographic-bunker/evergreen-review-archive/>

¹⁷⁰ Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man* (London: Vintage, 1964), p. 14.

In an earlier letter written on 6 November 1959, Shayer wrote, ‘What worries me very much is that as far as I know, not one english [sic] person has tuned into the wavelength of *Migrant*. [...] I’ve been doing what I can recently to sound things and people here, but the only suggestion of things stirring seems to be in Edinburgh and Glasgow.’ This leads Shayer to speculate that ‘[...] (any?) response [to *Migrant*] will be from ‘minority’ British – Scots, Welsh [...] – people who, like us, are preoccupied with the question of retaining a personal identity in the face of ‘England’. It is difficult to surmise what Shayer means exactly by ‘England’ – whether he is speaking to the all-invasive influence of an Anglo-Saxon culture, or more to the increasingly commercialised aspect of ‘English literature’ whose hardened canons exclude new poetry – but what is communicated here is that the kind of ‘community’ which the editors sought, at least for Shayer, was geographically locatable outside the more traditional centres of poetic production in Britain, i.e. London and Cambridge. The negotiation of literary nationalism is something of a loose theme which runs through the eight issues of the magazine, inaugurated by an excerpt from Samuel Johnson’s Preface to the Works of Shakespeare, offered by Turnbull in the first issue ‘by way of an editorial’ which defines a national literary ‘style’ as the ‘common discourse of life’, and as language rooted in the quotidian experience.

The editors also discussed, via correspondence, the utility of the magazine both in terms of what purpose they hoped it would achieve for themselves and for the community to which it was addressed. In a letter dated 1 October 1959, Shayer asserted that ‘the main point of *Migrant* lies in Britain’, a sentiment echoed in his 2006 interview with Richard Price, in which he states:

Apart from his Black Mountain College friends, possibly Ferlinghetti in San Francisco, apart from his few contacts out there [in California] I think almost certainly that [Turnbull] was thinking of his future [in Britain] rather than over there [...] It was a British or Scottish *Migrant* that was his persona then and he wanted to establish a foothold for the kind of poetry and writing that he valued.

In an autobiographical article written in 1991, Turnbull vouched for his ‘British persona’ of the 1950s and 60s:

Though I thought of myself as British, even Scottish (I had been in correspondence with and had written a poem for Hugh MacDiarmid), even occasionally perhaps English, my work was often perceived as Canadian or American. I had poems in early issues of *Origin* and *Black Mountain Review*. Some years later I would remark to a friend, somewhat bitterly perhaps, that I thought my destiny was to be the poet laureate of Rockall.¹⁷¹

Although Turnbull’s equation of the American little magazine world with an uninhabited islet in the North Atlantic Ocean is hyperbolic, his wish to bring poetic experimentation to Britain, his native context and the one to which he felt he belonged, is nevertheless communicated. If North American little magazine presses and small presses gave Turnbull exposure to independent publishing, and to self-identified experimental poetry and its attendant networks, *Migrant* was Turnbull’s linking of North America and Britain, not only in terms of facilitating the exchange of poetry, but to ‘prepare’ Turnbull’s artistic homecoming to Britain. As Turnbull commented in 1981, ‘I [wanted] to create a “context” that was not narrowly “national” and in which I felt I might be able to exist as a writer myself.’¹⁷² For Shayer, the magazine was more explicitly a way in which to make clear the connections between quotidian experience and artistic representation. He wrote to Turnbull on 18 September 1960, ‘There has been much in *Migrant* tending to reduce the guilt [of creative writing] by making rather more clear what the relations are between living and experiencing, and writing.’ An anonymous letter published in the eighth and final issue, most likely written by Shayer and edited by Turnbull, states:

I think it is essential to regard the little magazine as semi-private, and not a self-sufficient world in itself. More like theatre in rehearsal than the presented performance. It is a kind of preparation for other things, a place

¹⁷¹ Gael Turnbull, ‘Gael Turnbull’, in *Contemporary Authors Autobiography Series* (Detroit, Mich.: Gale, 1991) pp. 321-337 (p. 333).

¹⁷² Turnbull, ‘*Migrant* – A Personal Account’, p. 98.

where one can make one's mistakes and push forward one's tentative shoots both to one's own use and to those of the few others who can benefit from seeing them tried. But it is all subordinate to the ultimate break-through. One must keep that vision. And to be sure, many creative writers do very well without the little magazine world at all...

***Migrant* as social community**

One recurring concern expressed by Shayer was whether *Migrant* was having any immediate impact on its British readership, a concern inarguably shared by Turnbull, as evidenced in a letter by Shayer on November 4, 1960:

Your sensation about [the] lack of response here [in Britain] is too damn true. [...] Someone quotes from a *Migrant* article in *TLS* [*Times Literary Supplement*], but they don't say anything about *Migrant* existing, and nor does bloody [John] Wain in *The Observer* [...] This is what I predict: a good number of people have had some new impulse obscurely stirred by reading it, BUT THEY'RE NOT LETTING ON! Not yet: it isn't safe. Someone has yet got up in public and made it alright to speak of its existence, you see [...] So what's going to happen is that one of us will make a bloody success over something, and THEN (when it's too late, of course) plenty of people will write in saying how much they got out of *Migrant*, etc.

Despite Shayer's apprehension about the lack of immediate and public response to *Migrant*, Turnbull had in fact received favourable responses in private correspondence with British poets such as Robert Duncan, Edwin Morgan, Anselm Hollo, and Ian Hamilton Finlay.¹⁷³ Finlay was particularly appreciative of the magazine for its missives from the American poetry scene, in particular the poetry of Robert Creeley, Ed Dorn, Louis Zukofsky, and Lorie Niedecker. In June 1961, Finlay wrote to Turnbull: 'The more I see of American poems, etc. the more I feel that they have arrived at much the same conceptions as I have, in

¹⁷³ Morgan, Hollo, and Finlay would later have their work published by Migrant Press. Finlay's *The Dancers Inherit the Party*, published in 1960, became the imprint's bestseller and was republished in 1962.

my own wee way, rather home-made, and AGAINST everything I was taught to do by other Scotch writers.’ The letters also witness Finlay’s anxiety over initiating a dialogue with the American poets: ‘[The] American poets, Creeley, Dorn, etc. – I feel that they are my brothers. I’d like to show them my poems but I’d be scared they didn’t like them.’¹⁷⁴ Despite the initial hesitation, Finlay, encouraged by Turnbull’s advice on running a pamphlet imprint as well as a little magazine, established the Wild Hawthorn Press in 1961 (aided by *Migrant*’s mailing list), and the little magazine *Poor.Old.Tired.Horse* (1962-1967), which among other works published poetry by the American poets Finlay had discovered via *Migrant* and through correspondence with Turnbull.

As Turnbull maintained letter correspondence with Finlay after the initial contact, he similarly forged friendships with many of the contributors, suggesting that for Turnbull, *Migrant* was both a literary and social endeavour. A letter to Wanda Donlin, a contributor to the second issue, gives some indication of Turnbull’s motivation for the magazine:

[*Migrant*] bring[s] to life certain relationships. It gives a focus, a center. Something upon which the exchange with another human being can pivot. [...] It is a personal effort. To anyone interested in the kind of things that you and I and Michael [Shayer] are interested in. Which may be many, or few. It doesn’t matter. What matters to me is the exchange, the contact, the kind of focus that it can bring about. As it does, already, for me. And also, if possible, to discover (and this is the hardest and most unlikely part) others who have some sort of common community with me, and you etc. I wish I knew how to reach those “unknowns.” Those other Donlins, Shayers, and so on. But one can only go at it as it comes.¹⁷⁵

Turnbull’s wish to discover a ‘common community’ through *Migrant* is identified by David Miller and Richard Price as a defining feature of little magazines generally. They write that the little magazine format ‘serv[es] to

¹⁷⁴ Ian Hamilton Finlay, letter to Gael Turnbull, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Gael Turnbull Collection, Acc. 12553

¹⁷⁵ Gael Turnbull, letter to Wanda Donlin, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Gael Turnbull Collection, Acc. 12551, fol. 11

maintain a kind of magazine-enabled community, keeping the individuals abreast of each other's work and providing other forms of friendly interchange, such as wider literary information.'¹⁷⁶ Writing about the modernist little magazine *transition* (1927-1938), David Bennett posits that the magazine's editors had identified from the first issue 'the community that their magazine addressed, not as a diacritical community of social, political, national, or economic interests, but as a "disinterested" constellation of individuals united at the level of aesthetic sensibility.'¹⁷⁷

Turnbull's letter to Donlin exhibits modesty over the venture of 'common community', eschewing universal aspirations for a practical stance: 'But one can only go at it as it comes'. *Migrant's* small and private circulation certainly suited Turnbull's approach in developing a literary community which would, without ostentation, contextualise his own and Shayer's literary pursuits. Yet the recognition of *Migrant's* (necessarily) limited appeal did not impede Turnbull's pursuit in producing an idiosyncratic publication which presents poetry as part of a larger activity, and as a receipt of current social relationships. Utilising the technology of the day, such as mimeography machines – though this was, as noted earlier, already outmoded by the late 1950s – and tape machines, *Migrant* attempted to demonstrate the ways in which poetry was already – or could potentially be – inscribed into everyday experiences. Diary entries, book reviews, essays, quotations, and short 'notes' were interspersed with poems, giving the magazine the feel of a collage. *Migrant's* unique format was acknowledged by Raymond Federman and Helmut Bonheim, Turnbull's friends and editors of the little magazine *Mica* (1961-1962), which was established as a continuation of *Migrant* after its final issue in September 1960. The preface to the first issue of *Mica* noted: 'Our purpose will be to encourage poetry distinguished by clarity, readability, and wit, rather than by a finish which satisfies only theoretical or formal standards of verse. We will be particularly happy to use writing outside

¹⁷⁶ David Miller and Richard Price, *British Poetry Magazines 1914-2000: A History and Bibliography of Little Magazines* (London: British Library and Oak Knoll, 2006), p. xi.

¹⁷⁷ David Bennett, 'Periodical Fragments and Organic Culture: Modernism, the Avant-garde, and the Little Magazine', *Contemporary Literature* 30, no.4 (Winter 1989), 480-502 (p. 491).

the conventional forms, and therefore invite short radio scripts, speculations, character sketches, quotations, impressions, and translations.¹⁷⁸

Publication of *Migrant* concluded with the eighth ‘double’ issue, roughly a year after the venture had begun. The Migrant Press bibliographic pamphlet states: ‘Material coming in at both ends began to overflow the immediate context of the magazine, and it seemed more appropriate that some should be published as separate pamphlets. As the immediate usefulness of the magazine came to an end, the program of pamphlets continued.’¹⁷⁹ In 1960, Migrant Press published three pamphlets by poets who had all been previously featured in the magazine: Ed Dorn’s *What I See in the Maximus Poems*, Matthew Mead’s *A Poem in Nine Parts*, and Finlay’s aforementioned *The Dancers Inherit the Party*. The transatlantic flavour of *Migrant* was maintained by the publication of *SOVPoems* in 1961, in which Edwin Morgan translated into English political poems by Boris Pasternak, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Pablo Neruda, and Bertolt Brecht, Marina Tsvetayeva, Leonid Martynov, and Yegveny Yevtushenko. However, British poets made up the majority of the Migrant Press roster, which included Pete Brown, Shayer, Turnbull, Hugh Creighton Hill, Roy Fisher, and Anselm Hollo, among others. The ‘usefulness’ of *Migrant* was its creation of a literary context for Shayer and Turnbull in Britain, a context which was decidedly international and experimental in stance. Other small imprints, as Stuart Montgomery’s Fulcrum Press, was by the mid-1960s actively publishing work by poets whose early works Turnbull and Shayer had published in *Migrant*. In 1966, Migrant Press published the pamphlet *Few* by Pete Brown as its last ‘official’ publication (sporadic publications would continue until Turnbull’s death in 2004). As Turnbull explained, ‘There was no longer anything that Migrant [Press] could do that others could not do as well, and usually a great deal better.’¹⁸⁰ The magazine and the imprint were thus concluded as the practical needs they addressed – the dearth of representation in Britain of work by a loose group of poets – had been met.

¹⁷⁸ ‘Preface’, *Mica 1* (1960).

¹⁷⁹ The ‘multi-authored miscellany’ aspect of *Migrant*, which Shayer likened to ‘a hopeful creative new exhibition of paintings that one could get- the same kind of cohesion, the same kind of anxiety about making fruitful ju[x]tositions’ (undated letter), was maintained by the Migrant reading ‘platform’. These readings took place at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 1961 as well as in other locations in Britain in 1962 and 1963. (Price, ‘Migrant the Magnificent’, p. 31.)

¹⁸⁰ Gael Turnbull, ‘Dancing for an Hour’, *Chapman 78-79* (1994), 3-5 (p.5).

As Shayer had predicted in his letter to Turnbull in 1960, *Migrant* received wider public attention only after little magazines and presses of the 1950s and early 1960s came to be contextualised within a larger cultural movement.¹⁸¹ In 1974 Eric Mottram coined the term 'The British Poetry Revival' to describe the surge of small press poetry and otherwise 'non mainstream' poetry-related activities of the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁸² *Migrant* has hence been assessed, by critics such as Richard Price, as a precursor of the 'Revival'. As one of the earliest platforms in Britain for the work of American poets as Robert Creeley, Ed Dorn, and Charles Olson, as well as for the work of young British poets as Ian Hamilton Finlay and Roy Fisher, the magazine indeed did much to rejuvenate the British poetry scene in this period. There is a danger, however, in reading *Migrant* predominantly as an emblem of a movement opposed to the mainstream, and of conceptualizing the poetry and poets affiliated with the magazine within a polarized sphere of poetry politics which positions the 'establishment' on one end and the 'anti-establishment' on the other. Certainly Turnbull was not interested in much poetic output being published in commercial publications as *New Statesman* and *Listener*,¹⁸³ and professed to experiencing a 'strong sense of isolation' to poetry being widely published in Britain in the 1950s.¹⁸⁴ Yet no piece in *Migrant* remonstrates directly against what Mottram called the 'literary establishment [...] the big controlling presses, the universities and schools, and the reviewing fraternity'.¹⁸⁵ A list of names intended to receive copies of *Migrant*, recorded by Shayer prior to the

¹⁸¹ The publication of Michael Horovitz's *Children of Albion: British Poetry of the 'Underground'* in 1969 by Penguin publishers attests to this trend.

¹⁸² The poetry associated with opposition to main-stream literary production, or poetry of the 'anti-establishment', has long been haunted by difficulties in classifying their work, a fact which perhaps underlines their intrinsic heterogeneity and the poets' disinclination to be categorised into groups. Nevertheless, critics have attempted to assign labels to emphasise the poetry's disparity to poetry favoured by commercial publishers and funding institutions. Ken Edwards (who was mentored by Eric Mottram) for instance in his 2000 article 'The Two Poetries' makes the claim that poetry opposed to the 'mainstream' since the 1960s can be identified as 'modernist-derived', 'avant-garde', or even 'difficult art'. Later in the same article, he opts to call such poetry 'the parallel tradition', borrowing Ron Silliman's term to describe American L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry of the 1970s, thereby aligning the trajectory of the British experimental poetry scene with the American scene.

Ken Edwards, 'The Two Poetries', *Angelaki Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*. Volume 5, no. 1 (April 2000), 25-37 (p. 25 and p. 34).

¹⁸³ Fisher.

¹⁸⁴ Turnbull, 'Dancing', p. 3.

¹⁸⁵ Eric Mottram, 'The British Poetry Revival, 1960-75', *New British Poetries: The Scope of the Possible*, ed. by Robert Hampson and Peter Barry (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 15-50 (p. 15).

publication of the first issue, includes such 'literary establishment' figures as Philip Larkin and F.R. Leavis (Shayer's mentor at Cambridge). John Wain, associated with the Movement poets – and whom Mottram accuses of assuming 'singular authority of a certain narrow range of British poetry' – ¹⁸⁶ was sent issues of the magazine; he wrote to Shayer expressing enjoyment of the magazine upon receiving them. ¹⁸⁷

Turnbull's appraisal of Roy Fisher's *City* ¹⁸⁸ in the little magazine *Kulchur* (1960-1965) in 1962 illustrates his own aspiration for establishing connections through shared language, an ambition he without doubt held for *Migrant*. Turnbull compares Fisher's long poem about Birmingham to William Carlos Williams's *Paterson*, but identifies a crucial difference in the way that Fisher refuses to perceive the city as a metaphor, or as Turnbull notes, a '“myth”, a “vision”, a “means” [...] which will give relevance to the city [and] provide him and his poetry with some sort of “form” through which and by which the man and the city and the poetry can have a community...' ¹⁸⁹ According to Turnbull, Fisher provides no grand narrative to mould his perceptions of the city, and attempts 'to be true to the closest instinct of the moment, at each moment[,], even when its pattern or its meaning may appear utterly lost. Then, later, from another vantage point, we may see what has happened'. ¹⁹⁰ The sense of community is therefore discovered not in the contrived or metaphysical structure of the city, with its concrete delineations and purpose-laden architecture, but through the language describing the *experience* of wandering through the contemporary urban landscape: 'The very language we use is not 'mine' but is only 'ours'; and what we would say, of any material, is shaped [...] by the meanings which are in the material itself, meanings which we perhaps discover rather than create'. ¹⁹¹ Turnbull's estimation of Fisher's sensory perceptions as a reaching-out to a community via an already-communal language

¹⁸⁶ Eric Mottram, 'Preface to "A Treacherous Assault on British Poetry"' in *The New British Poets*, ed. by Gillian Allnutt, Fred D'Aguiar, Ken Edwards, and Eric Mottram (London: Paladin Books, 1988), pp. 131- 133 (p. 131).

¹⁸⁷ Michael Shayer, undated letter to Turnbull, MS Gael Turnbull Collection, Acc. 12551, fol. 1

¹⁸⁸ *Migrant* Press published *City* as a book in 1961; its supplement, *The Hallucinations: City II* was published one year later.

¹⁸⁹ Gael Turnbull, quoted in Horovitz, Michael Horovitz, 'Afterwords', in *Children of Albion: Poetry of the 'Underground' in Britain* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), pp. 316-377 (p. 319).

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 320.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

is a helpful approach to *Migrant*. Instead of operating as an outlet for already formulated communities or ‘forms’ of expression, the magazine was established as an experiment, a probing for a possible affinities and as a means to further poetic experimentation. In Turnbull’s own words, it ‘provided an opportunity to create a context in which things might happen, encounters occur, ways of expression be explored, ideas expressed’.¹⁹²

¹⁹² Turnbull, ‘Dancing’, p. 3.

Chapter Three: *Migrant* and Projective Verse

In the essay ‘Of Living Belfry and Rampart: On American Literary Magazines Since 1950’, Michael Anania identifies a type of little magazine wherein ‘...the figureheads define the magazine’s precedent’:

Usually the writers chosen for these roles are not broadly accepted national figures [...] but the distinguished vestiges of previous new waves [...] What’s going on [with these kinds of magazines] is an experiment with the possibilities of a fairly well-articulated aesthetic; the play is outward from, then back to, a source, like a game of hide-and-seek – furtive, sometimes daring, but always in sight of home base. When the exploration of possibilities is especially thorough or eccentric, the magazine can be very exciting.¹⁹³

One way of understanding a little magazine’s organisation, content, and perhaps even its philosophy is, as Anania suggests, through the model of the figurehead. Anania’s use of ‘game’ and ‘home base’ as analogies to describe the correlation between the little magazine and its (s)elected figurehead emphasises his position that what makes a magazine of this kind interesting is the sense of ‘play’ it deploys vis-à-vis the aesthetics espoused by that figurehead. This is an important point, as the philosophies of influential artists and thinkers more often than not become distorted over time by their adversaries and supporters alike. As such, wilfully reading a magazine through a generalized or approximate conceptualization of a thinker’s work potentially limits our understanding of the innovations and variety of poetic and editorial approaches taken within and by a little magazine. The reading methodology of ‘figurehead-as-influence’ can only be productive if we locate specific aspects of the figurehead’s work, and then identify in what ways and to what effects the magazine engages or ‘plays’ with those ideas.

Charles Olson (1910-1970) can be distinguished as such a figurehead for *Migrant*. Olson was a poet, theorist, and rector of the experimental university

¹⁹³ Michael Anania, ‘Of Living Belfry and Rampart: On American Literary Magazines Since 1950’, in *The Little Magazine in America: A Modern Documentary History* (Yonkers: The Pushcart Book Press, 1978), pp. 6-23 (p. 12).

Black Mountain College, whose 1950 essay-manifesto 'Projective Verse',¹⁹⁴ espousing poetics of 'composition by field', significantly shaped the landscape of American and, later, British poetry.¹⁹⁵ Olson's manifesto helped to crystallize the 'Black Mountain poets' in the cultural imagination. Donald Allen in his now canonical 1960 anthology *The New American Poetry* identifies Olson, Paul Blackburn, Robert Creeley, Ed Dorn, Robert Duncan, Larry Eigner, and Denise Levertov among others as belonging to a particular counter-cultural poetic community engaging with Olson's ideas concerning projective verse. Allen also notes that these writers were all 'originally closely identified with the two important magazines of the period, *Origin* and *Black Mountain Review*'.¹⁹⁶ Olson played a large role in the early formulation of both magazines. Not only did he advise their respective editors on an editorial capacity, his poetic and theoretical work, namely aspects of 'composition by field', were published and discussed at length in both magazines.

Olson's 'Projective Verse' manifesto is today considered a landmark essay which has informed many directions in innovative poetry. Edward Foster suggests that the essay was 'crucial in defining the directions followed by poets as otherwise diverse as Allen Ginsberg, Michael McClure, and Jeremy Prynne'.¹⁹⁷ It has also been widely acknowledged as an oblique text whose theorems are difficult to grasp. Marjorie Perloff for example has described PV as a derivative text which 'cut and pasted' earlier theorems about poetry made by Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, and Ernest Fenollosa.¹⁹⁸ Despite such charges, PV was perhaps so influential because it boldly, and in Olson's famous

¹⁹⁴ Hereafter referred to as PV. The essay was first published in *Poetry New York*. 'Projective Verse' referenced here is in *A Charles Olson Reader*, ed. by Ralph Maud (Manchester: Carcanet, 2005).

¹⁹⁵ Much of this was due to Turnbull's activities, which will be discussed shortly.

¹⁹⁶ Donald, Allen, 'Introduction', in *The New American Poetry*, ed. by Donald Allen (New York: Grove Press, 1960), pp. xi-xiv (p. xii).

The connection between these two American little magazines was noted by Creeley in an interview: '*Origin* was ... the meeting place for many of the writers who subsequently became the active nucleus for the *Black Mountain Review*. More than any other magazine of that period, it undertook to make place for the particular poets who later came to be called the Black Mountain School.' (Robert Creeley, 253)

¹⁹⁷ Edward Halsey Foster, *Understanding The Black Mountain Poets* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), p. 49.

¹⁹⁸ Marjorie Perloff, 'Charles Olson and the "Inferior Predecessors"', *ELH* 40 (1973), 285-306 (p. 295).

effuse writing style, championed an erasure of ‘inherited verse’ during a period when many poets believed that academic verse, laying emphases on particular poetic conventions, dominated the American literary scene. As Foster argues, Olson in PV ‘erected [...] a vision of poetry unaligned to any cultural or political expediency [with] the force and conviction of an evangelist’s sermon.’¹⁹⁹ Among the approaches Olson advocated in the essay were the emphasis on the poem as a spoken act, the casting away of conventional syntax in poetry, and a new consideration of the role of the poet in opening people’s eyes to lived experience.²⁰⁰ It is likely that those inspired by Olson did not completely understand or advocate fully all of Olson’s claims or intentions in PV, but drew inspiration from the manifesto for their own projects.

Anne Day Dewey points out that Olson’s ‘composition by field’ ‘did not produce a unified school of experimental poetics [but] provided poets [...] with a crucial impetus to break with conventions and generate new poetic forms’.²⁰¹ Creeley’s statement confirms this: ‘We [Black Mountain poets] did use Olson as a locus without question [...] We weren’t leaning, I think, on Olson’s condition, but we were using a premise which he of course had made articulate in projective verse’.²⁰² These ideas suggest that the Black Mountain community as such was not formulated out of a stringent set of rules pertaining to a new aesthetic movement, but generated by a group of poets’ shared opposition against dominant poetic tendencies and an outlook towards formal poetic innovation. Olson’s PV, voicing with authority many of the group’s concerns, provided a common ground or text with which interested parties could engage; in this sense the ‘community’ was sustained largely by textual interchange, via letters and through the publication of these poets’ work in the same magazines. Significantly, Olson’s poetic theories, in particular PV, reached audiences beyond Black Mountain College, due in no small part to little magazines such as *Migrant*, which widened the sense of the imagined community united by defiance against conventional poetry and receptiveness to alternative methods of composition.

¹⁹⁹ Foster, p. 51.

²⁰⁰ This positioning of the poet as ‘seer’ was likely adopted from Modernist thought.

²⁰¹ Anne Day Dewey, *Beyond Maximus: The Construction of Public Voice in Black Mountain Poetry* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), p. 2.

²⁰² Robert Creeley, quoted in Martin Duberman, *Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community* (London: Wildwood House, 1974), p. 390.

Turnbull was most likely put in touch with the work of Olson and those of his poetic circle through a group of Canadian poets in the 1950s, among them Raymond Souster, editor of the little magazine *Combustion* (1957-1960). Impressed by Olson's poetry, Turnbull, having moved back to England in 1955, began in 1956 to distribute Olson's *Maximus Poems*, thereby becoming the first distributor of Olson's work in Britain. Upon transitioning from distributor to publisher in 1960, Migrant Press published Ed Dorn's *What I See in the Maximus Poems* (1960), which was 'among the first pieces of appreciation to engage with Olson as a major American author [in Britain]'.²⁰³ Turnbull's involvement with the Black Mountain poets can be seen in the first issue of *Migrant*, which included a piece by Ed Dorn. The second issue published work by Creeley, Cid Corman, and Robert Duncan; the third issue included Creeley's preface to Olson's *Maximus Poems*. Black Mountain poets are mainstays in the subsequent issues, though it is notable that Olson himself only appears once, with his prose poem 'Cashe's' in the eighth and final issue.

As the Black Mountain poets used Olson's PV as a 'premise' for creative negotiation, Turnbull similarly looked to the work and theories of Olson, and those of his literary coterie, as stimuli for experimentation rather than as sources of direct emulation. In a letter written in 1966 to *The English Intelligencer* (1966-1968), Turnbull voices his disdain for British imitators of Olsonian poetics:

I just don't see the point of such near parodies of Olson [...] the whole thing seems to me to be an easy transcript into what is the currently fashionable American poetic idiom [...] surely, somehow, there *are* ways of being 'for the island and its language' without merely parroting what certain Americans have done [...] at least it should be possible to avoid the more obvious sorts of 'I, minimus, of West Hartlepool etc.' – or the nervous jerks of Creeleyesque – heck, there are even more possibilities in American speech than *that* [...], however effective and interesting it may be

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²⁰³ Exhibition notes from 'The Possibility of Poetry: from *Migrant* magazine to artists' books' (British Library exhibition 19 January - 26 March 2007), private collection of Jill Turnbull, p. 9.

²⁰⁴ Gael Turnbull, *More Words: Gael Turnbull on Poets & Poetry*, ed. by Jill Turnbull and Hamish Whyte (Bristol: Shearsman Books, 2012), p. 163.

The English Intelligencer, edited in Cambridge by Andrew Crozier and later by Peter Riley, contained writing by poets who later became affiliated with the British Poetry Revival. The free monthly periodical, circulated predominantly among acquaintances, was established partly as a means to formulate a British avant-garde poetics through publication of poetry, correspondences, and criticism.²⁰⁵ In his letter to the editor Turnbull is concerned with the ways in which innovative poetic approaches offered by American writers (such as Olson) are being inattentively replicated by British poets.²⁰⁶ Although conceding that the editors are only ‘trying to prod something to happen [...] and I do realise that, trying to edit a magazine, it takes several issues sometimes to establish what one is after’,²⁰⁷ he urges against the promotion of a singular speech-language (i.e., a limited formulation of ‘American speech’ based on Olson) at the expense of others, let alone one that claims to be representative of a British ‘tradition’. Turnbull writes in the letter: ‘I haven’t much sense of ‘the island and its language’ – my only sense is of this individual or that individual, with his or her voice, discrete and each themselves’.²⁰⁸

Turnbull’s critical attitude towards what he sees as imitations of Olson’s poetics, and his disparaging stance toward a nationalized poetics, give some indications of the ways in which he hoped the work of the Black Mountain poets would function in *Migrant*. Rather than unequivocally advocate the work of Olson and his coterie, the magazine positions them as possible directions and/or resources for the production of and conversations about innovative poetry. In doing so, *Migrant* poses the key question: can a particular movement in American poetics – whose principles are locatable, as I will argue, in Olson’s Projective Verse manifesto – be imaginatively negotiated within a non-American

²⁰⁵ Daniel Kane, ‘Wholly Communion, Literary Nationalism, and the Sorrows of the Counterculture’, *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*, Vol 52, Number 1 (Spring 2011), 102-127 (p. 123).

²⁰⁶ This tendency is observed by Daniel Kane in his review of Peter Whitehead’s film *Wholly Communion*, which records segments of the 1965 Albert Hall poetry readings featuring American poets associated with the Beat movement alongside British, New Zealand, and European poets. Commenting on British poet Michael Horovitz’s performance, Kane writes, ‘Isn’t Horovitz’s performance, as Whitehead shot it, in a sense ‘about’ the tension between an English poetic tradition positioning itself as irrelevant in the face of the growing hegemony of American literary culture – a culture that was in large part predicated on celebrating a revised though still inherently patriotic vision of “America”?’ (Kane, p. 114.)

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Turnbull, *More Words*, p. 164.

context? Donald Allen in his introduction to his anthology *The New American Poetry* celebrates Black Mountain poetry as an exemplar of American avant-garde poetics. In *Migrant*, however, there is a disinclination to present Black Mountain poetry in such a congratulatory or pro-American manner; instead, the magazine encourages negotiation of aspects of the poets' formal strategies and the theoretical frameworks which inform their creative practise. Although Black Mountain poets feature regularly in *Migrant*, as previously noted, the work of British writers and essayists emerge more prominently from the fourth issue. As the magazine progresses, anonymous letters, essays, reviews, and poems increasingly engage with or specifically address each other, demonstrating the ways in which multifarious links can be made between poets of different nationalities and generations.

Alan Brownjohn's essay on Robert Creeley and Philip Larkin in the sixth issue, for example, demonstrates how two distinct poetic approaches could be constructively compared. Brownjohn examines Larkin's poem 'Days' and Creeley's 'I Know a Man', and locates their disparate formal and philosophical approaches to a similar theme, human mortality, specifically along the fault line of poetic schools:

Larkin's words represent the cautious, dispassionate, detached English 'Fifties' poetry, [while] Creeley's the present post-Imagist school in America. Larkin, and he is like nearly all the younger English poets of the fifties in this, celebrates 'non-attendance', he stands away from the moment, observing and reasoning in tranquillity and hoping that this creates calm and perspective. Creeley's poetry attempts above all to catch the particular living quality of the moment: immediacy, fidelity to momentary experience, is the guiding rule.²⁰⁹

Brownjohn is not concerned with expanding upon Larkin's and Creeley's differences; however, but in suggesting ways in which the two 'kinds' of poetry may begin to speak to one another: 'Wouldn't it be possible to imagine a poetry that kept the advantages of [Larkin's] approach, yet was more arresting and

²⁰⁹ Alan Brownjohn, 'Some Notes on Larkin and Creeley', *Migrant* 6 (May 1960), 16-19 (pp. 18-19).

vigorous in its apprehension of the physical nearness of things?’²¹⁰ Brownjohn identifies Larkin’s and Creeley’s divergent approaches as tendencies of disparate literary communities (the ‘younger English poets of the fifties’ and the ‘present post-Imagist school in America’) and suggests that poetic modes are generated not from the isolated individual but from the writer as a socialized being situated in particular literary contexts. As such, Brownjohn focuses on the formal aspects of Creeley’s and Larkin’s poems without paying undue attention to the poets’ nationalities or their reputed positions within the ‘mainstream – avant-garde’ matrix. He admires Creeley’s ‘post-Imagist’ attention to the moment, but sees how his poem can glean lessons from Larkin’s ‘application of a precise and judicious intelligence’ and a ‘controlling and informing moral hand’.²¹¹ In keeping institutional prejudices at bay, and in even-handedly comparing two works with distinct approaches, Brownjohn’s essay offers possibilities for how formal poetic techniques may be shared despite of differences in how the poet is identified within national, generational, and institutional contexts.

Creeley identified *The Black Mountain Review* as ‘a place wherein we might make evident what we, as writers, had found to be significant, both for ourselves and for that world’.²¹² Likewise, *Migrant* can be approached as a site for negotiating a set of values for an imagined community of writers inspired by but not necessarily emulative of Olson. In effect, the magazine is a testing ground to determine whether various literary traditions succeed or fail to speak to and/or learn from one another. In locating Olson’s PV as a key ‘source’ with which *Migrant* engages, particular innovative features of the published pieces may be highlighted. This chapter focuses on three approaches to poetry forwarded in PV. The first is the precept of the poem as an unfinished and continually evolving act. In *Migrant*, this is reflected in the innovative forms the published poems take, especially in the presentation of ‘non-poetic’ materials as poetry. Related to this idea of radicalized forms of poetry is Olson’s repeated emphasis on ‘breath’ as the originating point for poetry, reflecting his principle of shaping a poem according to spoken speech rather than following the dictates

²¹⁰ Brownjohn, p. 19.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Robert Creeley, ‘On *Black Mountain Review*’, in *The Little Magazine in America: A Modern Documentary History*, ed. by Elliott Anderson and Mary Kinzie (Yonkers: Pushcart Press, 1978), pp. 248-261 (p. 255).

of pre-dictated poetic forms. Finally, *Migrant* picks up and plays upon Olson's theory of the poem as a social act which engages with its environment rather than as a solipsistic receipt of the poet's individual consciousness. As J. B. Phillips suggests:

What [Olson] is looking for is a method of revealing the detailed structure of a life in such a way as to understand the forces that act upon it, and the context, or lack of context, amidst which it proceeds. The poem is thus best seen as the central act within a wider critical process. Moreover it is the whole process that he seeks to convey to the reader.²¹³

This idea of the individual – both the speaker and poem – as being part of a larger network of forces and ideas, which bears the marks of its influences and correspondences, is reflected not only in individual pieces in *Migrant* but in the magazine as a whole. It is necessary to briefly elucidate these three aspects of PV – process, breath, and relation – before moving on to elaborate how these elements can be traced in the magazine.

Olson's Projective Verse: Process, Breath, and Relation

What is most pertinent for our purposes in exploring PV's influence upon *Migrant* are the methods suggested by Olson for rejecting 'inherited forms' of poetry. As such, the central thrust of PV concerns the (re-) generation of new poetic strategies, especially in opposition to traditional modes of writing which he calls '“closed” verse, that verse which print bred' and which he locates in the poetry of Wordsworth and Milton.²¹⁴ It is significant that for Olson, the 'new' approach he articulates is attributable to previous schools of thought which have rejected what have now become conventional forms. Olson's 'borrowing' from other traditions of innovative literature in PV, however, is not hidden from view; he repeatedly attributes his ideas to other thinkers, contemporary and historical, such as Creeley, Edward Dahlberg, and E.E. Cummings, among others. In evoking a genealogy of influence, Olson achieves two things: the fabrication of

²¹³ J.B. Philip, 'Charles Olson Reconsidered', *Journal of American Studies* Vol. 5 No.3 (Dec 1971), 293-305 (p.304-305).

²¹⁴ PV, p. 39.

an imaginary community of innovators, and the declaration of the intent to continuously renegotiate one's principles and artistic practice before they harden into routine. PV is therefore an exercise of its principles: as the essay demonstrates, the individual text is always in open correspondence with other texts. As Foster writes, Olson's 'fundamental point in the essay was that in the end there is no authority, not even the authority of "Projective Verse"'.²¹⁵

Poetry as process

Contrasting projective verse ('projectile', 'percussive', 'prospective') to non-projective verse ('closed', 'private-soul-at-any-public-wall') in the opening lines of the essay, Olson announces the arrival of a new literary movement, inheriting the innovative techniques and spirit of Pound and Williams but distinctive in its responsiveness to the contemporary moment, the everyday experience of the mid-20th century: 'Verse now, 1950, if it is to go ahead, if it is to be of *essential* use [...]'²¹⁶ Olson conceptualizes poetry as the continual transference of energy from poet to reader. In this model of 'open verse', a poem is defined not by its material status as a finished product, but as a *process* of unfolding and becoming. As such, the poem is never complete, and remains in flux even at the point of its writing and publication. Waldrop writes that 'For Olson, the poem is written out of a field of forces, and [...] remains a field even when finished. Even the poem on the page is not a static object, but remains open to its process, remains a 'high energy-construct''.²¹⁷ Don Byrd links Olson's idea of 'composition by field' to William Carlos Williams's evocation of a poem as 'a field of action' and to Ezra Pound's statement that art 'is a sort of energy, a force transfusing, welding, and unifying'.²¹⁸ Developing the idea of the poetry craft as energy transfer and the poetic page as a field of energy allows Olson to convey the poem as being a vibrant and dynamic act, rather than as a staid and unvarying artefact. He writes:

²¹⁵ Foster, p. 51.

²¹⁶ PV, p. 39.

²¹⁷ Rosemarie Waldrop, 'Charles Olson: Process and Relationship', *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol.23/4 (Dec. 1977) 467-486 (p. 468).

²¹⁸ Don Byrd, 'The Possibility of Measure in Olson's Maximus.' *Boundary 2*, No.1/2 (1973/74), p.50. Indeed, Olson specifically identifies the work of Williams and Pound as projective verse in the opening section of his essay.

‘all the thots [sic] men are capable of can be entered on the back of a postage stamp. So, is it not the PLAY of a mind we are after, is not that that shows whether a mind is there at all?’²¹⁹ Through the idea of open verse, Olson proclaims a poetics which reflects the dynamism of a mind in active engagement with the world around it.

Constituting a poem as a series of kinetic energy transfers rather than as static result holds several ramifications for the poetic craft. One of Olson’s strategies for the poet is ‘to keep moving as fast as you can’; that is, the poet must be highly alert to the environment and to his own perceptions of them, as these engagements comprise the material for the poem.²²⁰ In this model, the poem can be imagined as a palimpsest bearing the traces of its composition, a witness to its own coming-into-being. Secondly, Olson lays emphasis on poetry as acts of discipline and labour: ‘[...] the man who writes, at the moment that he writes, and this is, it is here that, the daily work, the WORK, gets in, for only then the man who writes, can declare, at every moment, the line, its metric and its ending [...]’²²¹ Thirdly, according to Olson the poet must put himself in the open: ‘he can go by no other track other than the one the poem under hand declares, for itself’.²²² In allowing the content of the poem – that is, the various observations at play in the poet’s field of perception – to determine its form, the poet must make himself vulnerable to unexpected tension and dilemma within the poem.

Poetry as breath

Olson opens the essay with an attack on the ‘verse which print bred’ as a way to set up the desired alternative, poetry based on speech, which he calls the ‘breathing of the man [and] his listenings.’²²³ Rather than rely on traditional poetic forms, Olson advocates oral language as the source of poetry. As Foster writes, Olson ‘wanted a poetry with the spontaneity and immediacy of speech

²¹⁹ PV, p. 43.

²²⁰ The poet for Olson always takes the male pronoun. Whether this is indicative of his ‘masculine’ poetics as suggested by critics such as Mary Emma Harris (*The Arts at Black Mountain College* (2002)) will not be considered here.

²²¹ PV, p. 42.

²²² Ibid., p. 40.

²²³ Ibid., p. 39.

rather than the reflection and intentionality of writing.’²²⁴ Attentiveness to sound allows for what Olson calls the ‘speech-force of language’ to enter the poem, counteracting the ‘too set feet’ of conventional poetic syntax. Breath, encapsulating both the poet’s attentiveness to the cadences of human speech and his perceptions of them, is the means by which contemporary poetry may be refreshed, and for an individual poet’s idiosyncratic line to be forged. Looking to the new technology of the day, Olson is optimistic about the possibilities of the typewriter in capturing this new attention. Inspired by the typewriter’s ‘space-precisions’ in producing regular margins, he predicts that poetry may now be transcribed in the way that music is annotated, so that the reader may recreate for him/herself the poet’s particular speech patterns: ‘exactly the breath, the pauses, the suspensions even of syllables, the juxtapositions even of parts of phrases, which [the poet] intends’.²²⁵

For Olson, breath is the key to the formulation of a new poetics: ‘It is my impression that *all* parts of speech suddenly, in composition by field, are fresh for both sound and percussive use...’²²⁶ As if outlining the basics of poetry, he defines the two building blocks of verse based on breath: syllable (‘minimum and source of language’ which allows words to ‘juxtapose in beauty’ and line (‘the shaping tak[ing] place, each moment of the going’).²²⁷ As Foster points out, however, the notion of the poetic line following breath rather than intellect had been articulated previously by writers such as William Faulkner, William Saroyan, Thomas Wolfe, Henry Miller, and Muriel Rukeyser.²²⁸ The potency of Olson’s ‘poetry as breath’ lie therefore not in his originality of argument, but in his making use of the idea as a way to draw out and criticise aspects of traditional poetic forms, and to encourage new methods of writing.

One element of traditional poetic form which Olson contests is the use of conventional syntax, which he sees not only as an aspect of writing but symbolic of an approach to life: ‘And when the line has, is, a deadness, is it not a heart which has gone lazy, is it not, suddenly, slow things, similes, adjectives, or such,

²²⁴ Foster, p. 49.

²²⁵ PV, p. 46.

²²⁶ Ibid., p. 45.

²²⁷ Ibid., p. 45, p. 42, p. 41, and p. 43.

²²⁸ Foster, p. 50.

that we are bored by?’²²⁹ Olson’s proposed alternative is reliance on the ear: this approach allows the poet to more sharply observe the world around him, in the candid recognition of both its beauty and tensions. In turn, he may reject complacency of thought and cliché, both in poetry and in life. It is worth quoting Olson at length here to get a flavour of his ‘poetry as breath’ as both writing method and life principle:

ONE PERCEPTION MUST IMMEDIATELY AND DIRECTLY LEAD TO A FURTHER PERCEPTION [...] [It] is a matter of, at *all* points (even, I should say, of our management of daily reality as of the daily work) get on with it, keep moving, keep in, speed, the nerves, their speed, the perceptions, theirs, the acts, the split second acts, the whole business, keep it moving as fast as you can, citizen. And if you set up as a poet, USE USE USE the process at all points, in any given poem always, always one perception must must must MOVE. INSTANTER, ON ANOTHER!²³⁰

Olson describes ‘closed verse’ in the essay as lifeless, slow, and solipsistic. Projective verse in contrast concerns immediacy of lived experience, which for Olson is encapsulated in the unpredictability and speed of speech: ‘the split second acts’. In order for the poet to utilise these energies in his work, he must be observant and open to the world at large, and to not focus exclusively on the inner machinations of his own mind – what Olson critiques as ‘the Egotistical Sublime’ in Wordsworth’s and Milton’s poetry.²³¹ As Waldrop elaborates, breath for Olson ‘gives birth to rhythm and to the poem [...] [It] stands for the process of the poem’s coming into being’.²³² In advocating ‘poetry as breath’, Olson proposes a procedure of attentive making as a method of writing, as well as the configuration of the poet as an integral participant, a ‘citizen’, of the world which he describes.

²²⁹ PV, p. 43.

²³⁰ Ibid., p. 41.

²³¹ Ibid., p. 39.

²³² Waldrop, p. 468.

Poetry as Relation

Constituting the poem as a product of an on-going process and placing breath at the centre of that process, Olson culminates the essay by posing the possibility of poetry as communal language, or as participatory acts between individuals. He writes: ‘It comes to this: the use of a man, by himself and thus by others, lies in how he conceives his relation to nature, that force to which he owes his somewhat small existence.’²³³ This model of ‘poetry as relation’ is arguably Olson’s most imprecise formulation in the essay, as the methodology of the ‘new poetry’ blends obliquely with his metaphysical conceptualisation of the nature of reality which is not clearly articulated in PV. Critics such as Rosemarie Waldrop emphasise that the essay should be read alongside Olson’s other theoretical texts in order to formulate a clearer picture of his theory of relation between objects – both animate and inanimate – which was central to his view of the universe.²³⁴ Olson writes: ‘At root (or stump) what *is*, is no longer THINGS but what happens BETWEEN things, these are the terms of the reality contemporary to us – and the terms of what we are’.²³⁵ Robert von Hallberg argues that Olson’s obscurity in communicating his principles of poetry was intentional, as he aims to ‘draw the reader into the hermetic circle of understanding by *requiring* interpretation.’ As such, the poem for Olson according to Hallberg is ‘not a “reflection upon” but an “engagement with” [and] invites not observation but response in kind.’²³⁶ Unpacking Olson’s complex and sprawling theory of relations, however, is beyond the scope of this project. For our purposes here, Olson’s relational principle is useful in highlighting the poetic method he rejects, and in considering the possibilities for poetic production that his often ecstatic pronouncements may have provided for other writers.

Olson critiques the poet who relies on intellect alone as the source of poetry. Such a figure, Olson argues, is limited by the ‘lyrical interference of the

²³³ PV, p. 48.

²³⁴ Waldrop, p. 469.

²³⁵ Charles Olson, *Human Universe and Other Essays*, ed. by Donald Allen (New York: Grove Press, 1967), p. 123.

²³⁶ Robert von Hallberg, *Charles Olson: The Scholar’s Art* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 32 and p. 31. See von Hallberg’s essay ‘Olson, Whitehead and the Objectivists’ (*Boundary 2*, 2, No 1 / 2 (1973/1974)) on the integral influence of the work of philosopher Alfred Whitehead on Olson’s poetic theory.

individual as ego' and 'shall find little to sing but himself.' He asks instead of the poet to recognise himself as an object among other objects occupying a field of relations, and as a participant in a larger force. In doing so, Olson writes, the poet 'will be able to listen, and his hearing through himself will give him secrets objects share.'²³⁷ The configuration of the poet as holding an essential relationship to the physical world, rather than only to a metaphysical one, correlates into a compositional methodology of observing relations within the poet's specific field of engagement. As Anne Day Dewey notes, '[in] focusing attention on the poem as a transfer of energy from the environment through the poet to the poem [Olson] encourages the poet to articulate influences other than consciousness shaping the poem'.²³⁸ Interestingly, in PV Olson writes that the very object of his attack, non-projective poetry, should also be acknowledged as part of the poet's observation of relations. He writes: 'each of us owes to the non-projective, and will continue to owe, as both go alongside each other'.²³⁹

What creates the dynamics of the poem for Olson, and what makes it immediate and 'acting-on-you', is determined by the construction of the poem in divulging relations and tensions between objects.²⁴⁰ The fluidity with which Olson shifts between speaking about compositional method and approaches to life, however, results in a deep ambiguity in PV about what he denotes by his use of the term 'object'. We are told that the elements of the poem such as the line, syllables, images, and sound, constitute objects, but so too does the poet. Olson writes: '[Elements in the poem] must be handled as a series of objects in such a way that a series of tensions (which they also are) must *hold*, and to hold exactly inside the content and the context of the poem which has forced itself, through the poet and them, into being'.²⁴¹ The key idea that can be extrapolated from this vague formulation of relational objects is the model of the poem as a container for what Olson calls 'proper confusions': the poet's observation and notation within the space of the poem of the multiplicity of voices, activities, rhythms, and viewpoints which constitute humanity. In rejecting a poetics of the intellect

²³⁷ PV, p. 47, p. 48, and p.48.

²³⁸ Dewey, pp. 13-14.

²³⁹ PV, p. 49.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 44. Foster links this notion of form deriving out of tensions as 'a restatement of conventional romantic organicism' made by writers such as William Saroyan a decade before 'Projective Verse' was written. (Foster, p. 50).

²⁴¹ PV, p. 44.

based solely on the poet's own subjectivity, Olson proposes an alternative method which celebrates the diversity of life.

If projective poetics is the exchange of constantly shifting energies, then the poem has the capability to register the various transformations of the social sphere. Dewey sees this move within PV as a radical re-connection of poetry to politics: 'By using the poem to register social forces acting on the imagination, the [Black Mountain] poets articulated changing perceptions of cultural media and thus of the space and role of poetry as social institution'. Furthermore, for Dewey this 'shift from individual to social agency' allows (and perhaps even encourages) various hybrid forms of personal and public voice to be configured.²⁴² This model of poetry, as direct engagement with the social world of the poet rather than exclusively with his emotional world, is an important point of negotiation in *Migrant*.

Exploration of Projective Verse in *Migrant*

The idea of poetry as process, wherein the poet continually receives and transfers energy from his surroundings to the poem, is encapsulated in the structure of *Migrant*. One way to conceptualize the anonymous letters, essays, reviews, and quotations interspersing the individual poems is to approach them as the poems' source materials. Richard Price calls these materials in *Migrant* an 'open collage of texts' which establishes for the magazine a 'connection to a wider world [and] a sense of social context'.²⁴³ Indeed, the juxtaposition of poetry with commentary about the poetic craft – and on some occasions, with specific reference to a poet featured in *Migrant* – gives the sense of the poem as responding to and prompting activity in the world of social relations. The letter to the reader in the first issue specifically considers the little magazine as a site for meaningful interchange:

What is important? Where is the center of contemporary consciousness?
It lies in what I say to you, what you say to me. What is language for, if it
isn't so that one man can speak to another? But what we each say may be

²⁴² Dewey, p. 10 and p. 19.

²⁴³ Richard Price, 'Migrant the Magnificent', *PN Review* 174 (March/April 2007), 29-33 (p. 31).

very different. And the saying of it will never be so simple as to require no art.²⁴⁴

Frequently letters and essays in *Migrant* discuss the poetic process vis-à-vis publication and criticism. This demonstrates Turnbull's conviction that the discussion of the poetic craft, however perceived as commonplace, is integral to the creative process, and that the little magazine is one fulfilment of this need. For example, an anonymous letter-writer in *Migrant* 3 remarks:

You say praise of your work almost frightens you, and I think I know what you mean by that. It makes too public and self-conscious what began as and should remain a spontaneous, un-self-conscious process. Also, praise carries with it expectations of fulfilment, and poetry can't be written to expectations. Isn't that why many poets have walled themselves off, as poets, not only from the public, and critics, and cliques, but even from family and friends?²⁴⁵

Although the letter writer seems initially to uphold the idea of poetry as a spontaneous and solitary endeavour, a poet's self-conscious retreat from the social world is regarded with scorn. Despite the ugliness of the 'literary market place' where works may be 'puffed, hawked, and haggled over', the letter-writer concludes that 'you write for yourself, but you can't keep it to yourself, or file it in a drawer for "posterity".'²⁴⁶ In the embedding and interlinking of poems with 'extra-poetic' material, *Migrant* makes a strong case that the writing of poetry and the discussion of it are essentially linked. Each endeavour sustains the other, not in necessarily validating its purpose, but in their continuation and development. Cid Corman, for example, found inspiration in *Migrant*'s use of letters:

I had and retain an interest, picked up by Gael Turnbull in *Mica* and *Migrant* and by others since, in using letters – mainly as a way of bringing the writer's life and normal use of language into more specific

²⁴⁴ Letter to reader, insert in *Migrant* 1 (July 1959).

²⁴⁵ 'From a Letter', *Migrant* 3 (November 1959), 10-11 (p.10).

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

relation to his work, and not for confessional purposes. Some stimulated more poetry, as witness Olson's use of one of his Ferrini letters (printed in the first issue [of *Origin*]) as part of *In Cold Hell, in Thicket*.²⁴⁷

Many of the pieces in *Migrant* register the idea of artistic composition as a series of dynamic and on-going engagements with the world it endeavours to reflect. Olson's vision of the poem as a process and an open-ended 'high-energy construct' takes several forms in *Migrant*. One way in which this is demonstrated is through obscuring the distinction between 'raw material' and 'finished product'. This ambiguity makes transparent the process of composition, and poses a challenge to the concept of the completed poem. Thomas Lundin's review of Gregory Corso's poem 'BOMB' in the third issue, for example, applies the concept of 'open verse' to the literary review.²⁴⁸ The usual form of the review, that of reflective analysis and criticism, is here replaced by an open-ended structure which endeavours to mimic the mind receiving impressions:

But what is it? It goes bang. A big noise. Splendid. Hooray. November the Fifth and the Fourth of July and le quatorze de juillet. All of that, and a bit over. No doubt at all.²⁴⁹

The amorphous shape of the review reflects the reader's mind at work; no observation seems too prosaic to warrant omission. Lundin notes for instance that the poem consists of one hundred and eighty-eight lines: 'All those lines. Lines of words. Lines of a sheet. Carefully arranged'. The absence of quotations from Corso's poem alerts the reader to the fact that this particular 'review' is a creative work in its own right, taking Corso's piece as a pretext for its making. Lundin considers Corso's 'BOMB' as potential metaphor ('A litany. Making a joyful noise'; 'And yet, for all that, sad. Lonely.') and as physical and material entity ('But is it literature? Undoubtedly it is written'.)²⁵⁰ As a record of the process of encountering a poem, this 'review' is an ostensible engagement with

²⁴⁷ Cid Corman, 'Introduction', in *The Gist of Origin 1951-1971: An Anthology*, ed. by Cid Corman (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1975), pp. i-xiii (p. xiii).

²⁴⁸ Thomas Lundin was Turnbull's occasional pseudonym.

²⁴⁹ Thomas Lundin, 'A NOTE on Gregory Corso's BOMB' *Migrant* 3 (November 1959), 16-17 (p. 16).

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

Olson's directive for the poet to document his rapid responses to the environment.

A 'transcription from a tape recording, of an address given at a public school supper' appears in the fifth issue. The piece is reminiscent of Olson's provocation to the poet to use technology to capture the cadences of speech at it was actually spoken. The use of spacing and dashes therefore indicates the various lengths of pauses in the speaker's diction. As with Lundin's review, a poem is formulated out of an unlikely source.

Rumour has it
 that there is a certain study in this House
 which is notorious
 for the loud wild sounds
 of music
 which find their way through its door and window
 at various hour of day and night – ²⁵¹

This piece engages with 'composition by field' in making transparent the form of conversion from 'field recording' to poem. Content-wise, the piece addresses several persistent themes in *Migrant*: the comparison of North American and British culture, and the consideration of the ways in which different art forms – music, opera, theatre, and poetry – succeed or fail to communicate contemporary experience. Here, the speaker praises jazz music as an American 'way of expressing life that allows a man his essential dignity' and laments that 'the English just don't have song in this way'.²⁵² The speaker's reflection of the gap between experience and artistic form – that is, the various successes of art in reflecting reality – echoes Olson's concern in PV that the typical poet no longer responds meaningfully to his immediate environment.

Works in translation feature consistently in *Migrant*, and relate to Olson's definition of a poem as a process of continual unfolding and becoming. Translations feature in every issue, including renditions of both contemporary and historical works by currently practising poets. Some examples include

²⁵¹ 'From a Tape Recording' *Migrant* 5 (March 1960), 17-19 (p. 17).

²⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 18.

Morgan's translation of Boris Pasternak; Anselm Hollo of Joachim Ringelnatz and Hans Arp; Helmut Bonheim of Bertolt Brecht and Georg Trakl; and Raymond Federman of Henri Michaux. Translations are acts of conversion par excellence: it is implicitly understood by the reader that the translated poem is not the 'final' or 'complete' version. Furthermore, translations in *Migrant* bear out Olson's dictum that that modification of compositional methods, with emphasis on attention to breath, involves a new 'stance towards reality', a 'change beyond, and larger than, the technical'.²⁵³ Taken as acts of engagement between disparate cultures, translations play a key role in Turnbull's agenda to 'cross-fertilize' both literary strategies and outlook in life.²⁵⁴

In the first issue, for example, Michael Shayer, in his preface to his translation of a letter by French writer Leon Bloy, notes the distinction he sees between expression of emotions in English and French. Comparing what he sees as English reluctance to openly express emotions to the French 'wearing their heart on their sleeve', he writes:

In translating this letter I found myself trying to go back to the very naked and simple direct statement of feeling that you get in the early English writers like Mother Julian and Walter Hilton. I am sure our language is capable of bearing this kind of speech again; though the achieving of it is as much a personal matter of living and communicating with people as it is a matter of use of language.²⁵⁵

Shayer here concludes that language holds a direct correlation to the practice of life, the 'living and communicating with people'. Reliance on hackneyed language, he claims, has culminated in 'second-hand emotions', and hence in English emotional reticence: 'there is that capacity [to express sincere feeling] in our language which then was out in the open and used, but now has to be dug for'.²⁵⁶ Shayer's preface to the translation echoes Olson's attack on conventional

²⁵³ PV, p. 40.

²⁵⁴ Joni Turnbull, 'The Migrant Years', *PS 1* [Prose supplement to *Painted, Spoken*] (2006), 6-14 (p.8). As noted in Chapter 2, Turnbull's earliest publications were translations of Canadian French poetry into English.

²⁵⁵ Michael Shayer, 'A Letter of Leon Bloy' *Migrant 1* (July 1959), 11-17 (p. 11).

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

language, and his call to actively formulate language to reflect a dynamic engagement with the world. Shayer's analogy of 'digging' for a more expressive language resonates with Olson's declaration that 'all parts of speech suddenly, in composition by field, are fresh for both sound and percussive use, spring up like unknown, unnamed vegetables in the patch, when you work it, like spring'. Here Olson is speaking about the symbiotic relationship of 'approach to world' and the words we use to represent this approach. The correlation between word and perception of world, however, can only be arrived at with labour, after which language may, Olson writes, surprise us ('spring up') like the unnamed vegetable in the springtime.²⁵⁷

Morgan prefaces his translations of four poems by Mayakovsky in the fifth issue: '[F]or various reasons – the satirical tone, the verbal inventiveness, the wild humour – I found that the poems went rather better into Scots than into English.'²⁵⁸ The poems can be approached as a play on Olson's notion that 'it is from the union of the mind and the ear that the syllable is born'.²⁵⁹ The onomatopoeic quality of the words in Scots is immediately striking. 'A Richt Respeck Fur Cuddies',²⁶⁰ for instance, begins:

Horse-cluifs²⁶¹ clantert²⁶²
 Giean²⁶³ their patter:
 Crippity
 Crappity
 Croupity
 Crunt.²⁶⁴
 Bleezed in the blafferts²⁶⁵,
 Wi ice-shoggly²⁶⁶ bauchles²⁶⁷,
 The street birlled²⁶⁸ and stachert²⁶⁹.

²⁵⁷ PV, p. 45.

²⁵⁸ Edwin Morgan, 'Four translations from Vladimir Mayakovsky' *Migrant* (May 1960), 5-9 (p. 5).

²⁵⁹ PV, p. 42.

²⁶⁰ cuddies: horses (all glosses by Edwin Morgan)

²⁶¹ cluifs: hoofs

²⁶² clantert: clattered

²⁶³ giean: giving

²⁶⁴ crunt: smart blow

²⁶⁵ bleezed: fuddled, drunk

²⁶⁶ shoggly: shaky

²⁶⁷ bauchles: shoes

The cudy cam clunk²⁷⁰,
 Cloitut²⁷¹ doon doup-scud²⁷²
 And wheech²⁷³

Morgan's translation animates the idea, expounded so persistently in PV, of language's potential in reflecting a poet's fresh encounter with the world. The double translation from Russian to Scots to English gives the reader an impression of Mayakovsky's playfulness and inventiveness. The refraction of Russian through Scots illuminates not only the contours of Mayakovsky's poem-world, but the humour which can be found in vernacular expressions as well as in the words' aural qualities. Olson's remark that the poet should 'get back to word as handle' suggests that language is a way of coming to grips with the world rather than confining our perception of it.²⁷⁴ As Von Hallberg notes: '[Olson's] attack on conventional syntax rests on the judgment that its patterns of word order are so worn that words lose their substance, nouns lose their referents, as they become mere signs in a too familiar pattern of thought'.²⁷⁵ Morgan's attentiveness to the 'breath' of Scots effectively renders the dynamism he found in Mayakovsky's poetry: the double translation affords an opportunity for the reader to contemplate the individual words' aural reflectivity of the world.

As translations in *Migrant* call attention to the innovative poetic strategies which are locatable in different cultural traditions, other works in the magazine reflect on the idea of 'place' as a premise for literary experimentation. 'Ed Dorn in Santa Fe' narrates Dorn's travels from the desert landscapes of Taos via Albuquerque, to the cityscape of Santa Fe. Reading the piece as an engagement with Olson reveals how writers, in negotiating with the idea of poetry as acts of social engagement, were formulating idiosyncratic approaches to writing about specific landscapes and their positioning within them. Dorn's essay 'What I See in the Maximus Poems', published by Migrant Press in 1960, explicitly outlines how Dorn sought in his own work to extrapolate methods used

²⁶⁸ birled: spun round

²⁶⁹ stachert: staggered

²⁷⁰ cam clunk: fell with a clatter

²⁷¹ cloitit: came down heavily

²⁷² doup-scud: bumping its buttocks

²⁷³ wheech: exclamation of sudden surprise

²⁷⁴ PV, p. 45.

²⁷⁵ von Hallberg, p. 71.

by Olson in his long poem 'The Maximus Poems'. In the essay, Dorn examines the ways in which projective verse may be used to formulate a sense of 'place' which illuminates its varied contours rather than flatten it with hackneyed assumptions. The crucial strategy, for Dorn, is to pay vigilant attention to experience as it unfolds. He writes:

I don't use the term Place as a mannerism, as an indiscriminate word, covering the 'doings of man, at all [...] We mustn't have anything to do with arrangements out into people's hands, with reports or accounts, at the same time not discounting it is a Place, where the din, of everything that happened there, and is, comes to the ear, and eye [...]'²⁷⁶

For Dorn, a more accurate sense of place is evoked by dedicated observation of relationships between objects in the writer's field of perception. He is particularly interested in calling to attention social tensions, and the ways in which these dynamics, often having a long history, are reflected back into how individuals and groups understand and engage with a specific place. In doing so, Dorn arguably seeks to imbue both the environment, and the art reflecting it, with an effect extending beyond offhand appreciation. He writes in 'What I see in the Maximus Poems':

There was from the start a superabundance of the effete condition, surface, large thin space, and a principle just dead enough and known enough to make a likeable and easy complication in what they found. Which was things, which are effete. [...] It is awfully particular, it takes a very exacting registration, such as Maximus is capable of, to make things not effete, effects.²⁷⁷

'Ed Dorn in Santa Fe' utilizes Olson's compositional method of registering rapid movement of eye, ear and mind. The deployment of projective verse on the particular location of Santa Fe gives specific shape to Olson's evocation of art as acts of social engagement. However, Dorn's piece in *Migrant* also demonstrates

²⁷⁶ Edward Dorn, 'What I See in the Maximus Poems' (Worcester: Migrant Press, 1960), p. 3.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

the ways in which a younger generation of American writers were re-shaping ideas and methods set forth in Olson's manifesto. One can say that Olson in PV is unguardedly optimistic in regard to the poet's ability to authoritatively reflect the social world around him. 'Ed Dorn in Santa Fe', however, casts some doubt on the projective poet's special skill, and asks to what extent the overwhelming force of consumerism shapes and ultimately limits the poet's conceptualization of objects in his field of perception.

In this piece, Dorn is primarily concerned with how racist attitudes towards the New Mexican Indians are sustained through language. He writes:

We live very much in the midst of Natives, that's what one tactfully must call the people of vague Spanish-Mexican descent. On the one hand they can't be referred to as Mexicans because that is taken as degrading, and the other, Spanish as an appellation sounds a little untrue. There is very little exchange because they don't really speak English.²⁷⁸

The palpable tension between Dorn's usage of 'we', 'one' and 'they' betrays an ironic stance regarding the relationship between white Americans and Indians in New Mexico. A suggestion is made in this opening passage that tactful language often disguises underlying racism. Dorn notes the many ways in which New Mexico Indians are perceived by white Americans as extensions of the natural landscape, and thus exploitable as art. He notes, too, that the Indians also engage with this dynamic of 'othering':

The people are all immigrants so that there is a certain uneasiness in that respect, and the indians don't escape either, having been infected by it. Made to produce blankets as such, jewelry, as I pointed out somewhere else, the circle is complete, now they use it as a lure, to con the white, from Iowa.²⁷⁹

A parallel is drawn between the processes of art-making and the objectification of places and people into fashionable commodities. Dorn observes how

²⁷⁸ Edward Dorn, 'Ed Dorn in Santa Fe' *Migrant 3* (November 1959), 17-22 (p. 17).

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.17-18.

commerce and language have the tendency to efface the complex dynamics of 'place' and transform them into easily digestible concepts. For instance, he notes how the department store J. C. Penny now sells the colourful clothes which the Indians wear to their 'traditional' dances, and the commercial interest in 'authentic' Indian crafts has given birth to the term 'Canyon-Road Artist', 'dressed in woven, not printed material'.²⁸⁰

Dorn does not see himself as existing outside the powerful processes of commodification: he notes how language often transfigures the environment into mere extensions of the user's subjectivity. His experience of the New Mexico desert landscape, however, which precedes his engagement of the city, demonstrates how the recognition of the enormity of the natural landscape is vital to reconfiguring the poet's position in the world, as well as alert him to the process wherein experience is ossified by language. J. B. Phillip argues that for Olson,

vast dimensions of space and time [...] affected personality in more complex ways. Along with a new sense of the size of nature comes a new sense of the size of man. The world is discovered to be 'more than I am'; human existence begins to take on the quality of participation in a wider community of life.²⁸¹

Dorn is clearly enamoured with the beauty of New Mexico: he proclaims the desert as a 'moon-land' and the Sangre de Christoes mountain range as 'a dinosaur back, the spiked plates of the mountains digressing into a tail, off toward Pecos'.²⁸² Yet Dorn is aware of his own process of memorializing New Mexico into a set of fantastical or romanticized assumptions. He observes: 'Distance is beauty, given. When you get to the city, that's something else'.²⁸³

Indeed, it is the city – Santa Fe – which most interests Dorn, as here his own consciousness does not take centre stage in the evocation of 'place': his perceptions as he records them are, perhaps by circumstance, crowded by others' voices, opinions, and actions. Referencing his earlier reverence towards the

²⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 20.

²⁸¹ Phillip, p. 300.

²⁸² Dorn, 'Ed Dorn in Santa Fe', p. 18.

²⁸³ Ibid., p. 19.

natural landscape as exotic and therefore desirable, he sees how this kind of approach cannot be imposed upon the social landscape: 'The Pterodactyl is not the ancestor of the bat. The Indian is still there underneath it all. I am momentarily discounting all fascination with the grotesques, the aesthetic, the thrill quality of the voyeur'.²⁸⁴ This chimes with his statement in 'What I see in the Maximus Poems' that 'place, as a non-human reality, is simply outside the presentments of human meaning'.²⁸⁵ What Dorn attempts in this piece, therefore, is an open-ended portrait of Indians living in Santa Fe which does not romanticize them as objects of pity or reverence. With the evocation of particular characters, the idea of the 'real deep Indian, retainer of tradition, the lengthless time meandering nirvana'²⁸⁶ is consistently denied.

The Indians whom Dorn encounters and observes in Santa Fe are men with long hair and handkerchiefs protruding from their jeans or khakis, teenage girls with their multi-coloured popsicles, old women in black mantillas gathered together speaking, the fat woman at the supermarket flinging produce into her shopping cart. 'The tourists don't see them', he notes. Dorn is attentive to how his own perceptions about and ways of speaking to the Indians are moulded by his awareness of racial prejudices. In speaking to an Indian landlord, for example, Dorn observes the landlord's conversational pauses which he 'took to be a normal response to a gringo'. Dorn also cannot disguise his disdain for the Indian 'sell-outs' who cater to the tourist market: he hears a Zuni marching band and it disturbs his 'sense of propriety, knowing, just what you do, that it isn't their sound. I wouldn't at all like any people [...] being made into monkeys'. Noting everywhere the objectification of the Indians, and their complicity in this tendency for the sake of commercial gain, Dorn laments: 'shame, shame, promotion, promotion, break it, break it'.²⁸⁷

Dorn understands that he is not exempt from the overwhelming influence of popular culture on social relations. The question of whether the artist, whether that be the poet or the 'Canyon Road Artist', has any agency in promoting positive institutional change simmers under the surface of his prose. He makes this concern more explicit in 'What I see in the Maximus Poems':

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Dorn, 'What I See', p. 3.

²⁸⁶ Dorn, 'Ed Dorn in Santa Fe', p. 20.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 22, p. 21, p. 19, p. 21.

That indians and artists and the mountains are the same here as the merchants and the artists and the mountains, all lying in the strata of promotion I would never argue with. Because, having a flagging patience, I won't bring forth something which balks at coming. Nor that it depends on me and my ability. It is that I refuse to be a party to any sort of obscurity'.²⁸⁸

The transcribing of social tensions within a particular environment recalls a key aspect of PV – that the objects in a poem should be regarded as forces of tension operating against other objects. In this way, Olson sought to forge a poetic voice which would actively respond to social forces rather than relegate them to the poet's expression of individualism. Dorn's piece engages with the projective verse aim of approaching the object in the poem 'exactly as they [...] occur [at the moment of recognition] and not by any ideas or preconceptions from outside the poem'.²⁸⁹ He does so by recording the trajectory of his perceptions about Santa Fe as 'place', including reflections of doubt concerning his own complicity in its trope-making. Dorn writes: 'When one goes out alone leaving all that behind, the causes that they try to infect us with, it is another thing, then one's eyes and ears harbor no presuppositions and it is good to be here.'²⁹⁰ 'Ed Dorn in Santa Fe' can therefore be approached as both an endorsement and negotiation of projective verse. Compositional methods espoused by Olson, such as the rapid recording of impressions and perceptions, and the recognition of various tensions between objects, can here be seen at play. At the same time, Dorn's frequently glib attitude toward the invasive influence of popular culture sees him shift away from Olson's model of the poet as playing a predominant role in shaping communal language.

Expanding the field of poetics

For Olson, relations, both between humans and between humans and their environments, constitute the raw materials for poetry. In *Migrant*, the inverse

²⁸⁸ Dorn, 'What I See', p. 3.

²⁸⁹ PV, p. 44.

²⁹⁰ Dorn, 'Ed Dorn in Santa Fe', p. 17.

formulation is also recognised: poems are the raw material for engagement between readers, and a conduit for considering one's relationship to the environment, within the framework of nationalism or otherwise. 'What matters is the exchange,' Turnbull writes in a private letter to a contributor, Wanda Donlin.²⁹¹ It is important to note that Turnbull and Shayer intended *Migrant* to be a trans-national forum for practising writers and critics of poetry. As Turnbull notes in a biographical essay from 1994, 'Most readers [of *Migrant*] were involved with writing, chiefly poetry, in various ways: as writers themselves, critics, other editors etc, plus various libraries.'²⁹² His predominant motivation for consolidating a committed group of writers in *Migrant* lies in his self-identification as an outsider to the commercial literary contexts, and a foreigner to national contexts. In this way, Turnbull aimed to construct the magazine as an interface between North American and British writers. As witnessed in his letters to his family, Turnbull's experiences of cultural exclusion as a young medical British student in America fostered in him a desire to keep channels of communication as open as possible.

As a space where poetry is cast in relation with the environment around it, and in suggesting the potential ways in which a poem can be gleaned from the environment (such as in the transcript of the tape-recording), *Migrant* makes manifest key aspects of Olson's field poetics. Taken as a social endeavour, it can be viewed as an embodiment of Olson's tenet for a poetic practice placing the poetic voice within a relational world of objects. Significantly, the incongruities between works engaging with different traditions and schools are not watered down but maintained as formal tension and concern for further discussion. An anonymous letter-writer in *Migrant* remarks:

I think it is essential to regard the little magazine as semi-private, and not a self-sufficient world in itself. More like a theatre in rehearsal than the presented performance. It is a kind of preparation for other things, a place where one can make one's mistakes and push forward one's tentative

²⁹¹ Gael Turnbull, letter to Wanda Donlin, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Gael Turnbull Collection, Acc. 12551, fol. 11

²⁹² Gael Turnbull, 'Dancing for an Hour', *Chapman 78-79* (1994), 3-5 (p. 3).

shoots both to one's own use and to those of the few others who can benefit from seeing them tried.²⁹³

Migrant's public, the reader-writer, is therefore made complicit in the act of the magazine's unfolding: *Migrant* exists for their benefit, so that in witnessing others' experimentation, they, too, could try their own hand at the endeavour. Another letter-writer in issue 3 asserts, 'It is only when we are able to communicate are we fully certain of what we have known.'²⁹⁴

²⁹³ 'From a Letter, Spring, 1960', *Migrant* 8 (September 1960), 4 (p.4).

²⁹⁴ 'Another Response: Autumn, 1959' *Migrant* 3 (November 1959), 13-14 (p. 14).

Chapter Four: *Poor.Old.Tired.Horse.*: Social and historical contexts

On April 2, 1962, Ian Hamilton Finlay wrote to Gael Turnbull regarding Edwin Morgan's recent guest appearance on BBC Scotland: '[It was the] first time the new poetry has been acknowledged on Scottish BBC- there's plainly a huge situation about to break into wild controversy – my position is – as it's always been – that someone has to bring the new and the old together in a continuity ... which can only be done by fairness. And by things like *POTH*.'²⁹⁵ *POTH*, Finlay's little magazine *Poor.Old.Tired.Horse.*, ran from 1962 until 1967 and published a wide range of international poets and artists, both 'traditional' and 'avant-garde', established and obscure, and from the present and the past.²⁹⁶ The little magazine appeared in a variety of formats (from a 9"x11" folded sheet, twelve-page booklet, among others) and visual layouts (utilising calligraphy, photography, woodcuts), though never fluctuating in what Morgan noted was the 'astonishingly unelitist price' of 9 pence.²⁹⁷ Finlay's evocation of Morgan's declaration of the 'new' poetry on the radio as 'wild controversy' is very likely a reference to the 'flytings' concerning the current state of poetry in Scotland, which were hotly being conducted at the time between poets, critics, and publishers on the radio, the correspondence pages of newspapers, and in the letter and opinion sections of quarterly and monthly magazines. These flytings, or artistic exchange of insults, appeared in the daily newspaper *Scotsman*, the quarterly magazine *New Saltire*, and the monthly magazine *Scottish Field*. Younger poets as Morgan and Finlay accused the Scottish literary infrastructure of elitism and exclusionary strategies, whereas more established poets and publishers, most vocally Hugh MacDiarmid,²⁹⁸ staunchly defended their position

²⁹⁵ Ian Hamilton Finlay, letter to Gael Turnbull, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Gael Turnbull Collection, Acc. 12553. All letters from Finlay to Turnbull in this chapter are from this source.

²⁹⁶ Although the last issue of *POTH* was published in 1967, the 'end date' for the magazine has often been dated at 1968, presumably because the issue was completed at the end of 1967 and distributed in the early months of the next year. At this time, Finlay was in the hospital with an antero-septal myocardial infarction. (MS Gael Turnbull, Acc. 12553)

²⁹⁷ Edwin Morgan, 'Early Finlay', in *Wood Notes Wild: Essays on the Poetry and Art of Ian Hamilton Finlay* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1995), pp. 16-24 (p. 21).

²⁹⁸ Hugh MacDiarmid (1892-1978) was the pen name of Scottish poet Christopher Murray Grieve. MacDiarmid is generally considered to be one of the most influential figures in Scottish literature of the 20th century, playing a key role in the Scottish Literary Renaissance.

within the infrastructure, while at the same time dismissing the younger poets' complaints as groundless.

MacDiarmid in particular viewed *POTH* and Finlay's small publishing press Wild Hawthorn – which Finlay had set up with Jessie McGuffie in 1961 – with suspicion. In 1962 he produced the infamous small pamphlet *The ugly birds without wings*, which attacked the editors by way of a passage from Patricia Highsmith's novel *Deep Water*: 'The ugly birds without wings. The mediocre who perpetuated mediocrity – the resentful, the world-owes-me-a-living face, which was the reflection of the small, dull mind behind it.'²⁹⁹ MacDiarmid's ostentatious public attack did not hinder Finlay's publishing activities; if anything, *The ugly birds without wings* and the debates around it succeeded in crystallizing *POTH*'s twin goals of newness and variety set in defiance against what Finlay undoubtedly regarded as the elitism and narrow-mindedness of the older Scottish literary networks. Others took a different view of the situation. Giles Gordon, editor of the quarterly magazine *New Saltire*, though voicing support for Finlay's publishing projects (praising Wild Hawthorn as 'weird and wonderful'), also believed that *POTH* 'would be much better received if the publishers let it speak for itself and did not rush around Edinburgh taking flying kicks at anyone not prepared to claim the merits of *POTH* in the correspondence columns of daily newspapers'.³⁰⁰ As Ken Cockburn notes, 'Both *POTH* and Wild Hawthorn Press emerged from a need to define an art and aesthetics separate from MacDiarmid and his influence, to create a 'support structure' of like-minded practitioners [which] was the opposite of closed and exclusive'.³⁰¹ The works presented in *POTH* and Wild Hawthorn Press, alongside the literary friendships Finlay fostered with poets such as Turnbull and Lorine Niedecker, evidence the development of an open-minded, international, and to some extent,

²⁹⁹ Hugh MacDiarmid, *The ugly birds without wings* (Edinburgh: Allan Donaldson, 1962), p. 1. The pamphlet was later withdrawn. Duncan Glen notes that the book dealer Kulgin Duval, who was identified by Finlay's supporters as being the likely commissioner of the *ugly birds without wings*, was slandered on the streets of Edinburgh after the pamphlet's publication. Duncan Glen, *Selected Scottish & Other Essays* (Kirkcaldy: Akros Publishing, 1999), p. 103.

³⁰⁰ Giles Gordon, 'Editorial', *New Saltire* 4 (Summer 1962), p. 2.

³⁰¹ Ken Cockburn, 'Introduction', in *The Dancers Inherit the Party: Early Stories, Plays and Poems* by Ian Hamilton Finlay (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2004), pp. xii-xxvi (p. xvi).

avant-garde aesthetic which was central to the magazine's self-formulation, setting it apart from the more isolationist Scottish models of the period.³⁰²

The aim of this chapter is to investigate Finlay's position within the Scottish literary scene of the early 1960s by using *POTH* as a case study. Beyond its physical existence as a monthly poetry magazine, *POTH* became, for Finlay and his supporters, a kind of cultural symbol and contemporary prescription against the ideology of Scottish literature's 'old guard', represented by the figure of MacDiarmid. Finlay identified *POTH* as adhering to the tenets of 'panache, humour, beauty, tradition and experiment',³⁰³ whereas MacDiarmid argued that the magazine was an example of a 'grudging enmity to the high culture of the past [and] the malevolent corrosion of values from within'.³⁰⁴ We can therefore conceptualize *POTH* as a node at which the literary principles of Finlay and MacDiarmid, along with their supporters', came to a head. The flytings have fueled much discussion on the ideological and aesthetic differences between Finlay and MacDiarmid. David Black, for example, argues that 'Finlay, with his concern for "the Beautiful", his love of the dangerous edge of whimsy and sentimentality, and his concern for perfectly-judged form, stood for everything that MacDiarmid rejected', which Black identifies as 'a vast, all-embracing poetry, a prodigy of moral and intellectual authority'.³⁰⁵ Duncan Glen writes that 'MacDiarmid regarded [...] the work of Finlay as inimical to what he regarded as the proper cultural purposes of high art poetry'.³⁰⁶ Glen also notes that the significant difference between MacDiarmid and poet-folklorist Hamish Henderson³⁰⁷ was their contrasting attitudes vis-à-vis the 'seriousness' of literary

³⁰² And likely, to Finlay's own formulation as a poet/artist during the 1960s, although this aspect will not be explored within the confines of this project. As Alec Finlay remarks, speaking to the publication of Finlay's first collection of poems published by Turnbull's Migrant Press in 1960, 'When the *Dancers* [*Inherit the Party*] appeared Finlay referred to himself as a Beat poet. It was a useful way of placing his poems within a new popular movement and separating himself from the curmudgeonly [Scottish] Renaissance.'

Alec Finlay, 'Afterward: The Dewy Glen', in *The Dancers Inherit the Party and Glasgow Beasts* by Ian Hamilton Finlay, ed. by Alec Finlay (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1996), pp. 95-114 (p. 100).

³⁰³ Alec Finlay, 'Introduction: Picking the Last Wildflower', in *Ian Hamilton Finlay: Selections*, ed. by Alec Finlay (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), pp. 1-61 (p. 20)

³⁰⁴ Hugh MacDiarmid, 'Teddyboy Poetasters: Hugh MacDiarmid on Younger Scots Poets', *Scotsman*, 18 May 1962, p. 15.

³⁰⁵ David Black, 'Ian Hamilton Finlay: A Window on the Early Work', *Chapman* 78-79 (October 1994), 34-37 (pp. 35-36).

³⁰⁶ Duncan Glen, *Selected Scottish & Other Essays* (Kirkcaldy: Akros Publishing, 1999), p. 143.

³⁰⁷ For more on Henderson, see note 384.

activity. MacDiarmid, he writes, adopted an inherently egotistical, ‘high-art Modernist’ belief that the ‘survival of Western culture was dependent upon their *individual* achievements as writers of great creative works of art’, whereas Henderson stood in fervid opposition to this strain of literary and social elitism.³⁰⁸ This difference in attitudes concerning the motivations of literary activity which Glen identifies between MacDiarmid and Henderson, I believe, is also applicable to the dynamic between MacDiarmid and Finlay.

A superficial review of the 1960s flytings between MacDiarmid and Finlay suggests that the older poet stood in wholesale opposition to Finlay’s literary concerns. Namely, MacDiarmid critiques Finlay’s interest in international poetry, asserting in one letter to *The Scotsman* that Finlay’s ‘internationalism’ was a mere badge for contemporariness and sophistication rather than an indication of quality. MacDiarmid also attacks Finlay’s use of (what Finlay called) ‘street-folk-speech’ as an easy way to appeal to a larger audience.³⁰⁹ However, an in-depth examination of the debates around *POTH*, and an analysis of its literary aims as revealed by the network of poets Finlay cultivated in the period, allows for a more subtle assessment of both Finlay’s and MacDiarmid’s aims regarding Scottish literature, beyond merely viewing the two poets as inhabiting diametrically opposing camps. For in spite of Finlay’s and MacDiarmid’s vociferous verbal attacks against the other, and the subsequent and widespread assessment by critics of the poets as literary adversaries, they in fact shared key artistic approaches, in particular as poets working within the Scottish context. Stephen Scobie maintains that Finlay and MacDiarmid were akin in their embracing of poetry as ‘inseparable from social or ‘public’ issues’: ‘Both demand a commitment to poetry as total as any political commitment’.³¹⁰ To this end, as I will argue in this chapter, both MacDiarmid and Finlay explored the use of vernacular Scots in their poetry and publications as innovative strategies for expression. Another significant similarity between the two poets is their international approach to literature. Alec Finlay points out that MacDiarmid and Finlay both looked beyond the literature of Scotland to escape parochialism, and that MacDiarmid’s dedication to internationalise Scottish poetry in the 1920s

³⁰⁸ Glen, *Selected*, p. 63.

³⁰⁹ Hugh MacDiarmid, ‘Letter to Editor’, *The Scotsman*, 22 May 1962, p. 6.

³¹⁰ Stephen Scobie, ‘The Side-Road to Dunsyre: Some Comments on Hugh MacDiarmid and Ian Hamilton Finlay’, *Akros* 15, Vol V (1970), 51-61 (p. 52).

is echoed in Finlay's position as the Scottish representative on the *comité international* of the concrete poetry movement in the 1960s.³¹¹

Black's and Glen's assessment of Finlay's and MacDiarmid's fundamental disparity regarding their attitudes to art, however, still holds true: the two poets' international outlook and use of Scots in their poetry were dissimilarly motivated. Whereas MacDiarmid aligned his literary aims along High Modernist ideals of metropolitan modernism, Finlay found inspiration in the artistic principles of the historical avant-gardes of the early 20th century, who often took as their object of their work and critique the notion of art's 'cultural purpose'. To this end, Finlay did not explicitly align his artistic output, as MacDiarmid had done, to the project of Scottish Nationalism. MacDiarmid's and Finlay's attitude regarding the relationship of art to audience also diverged. If MacDiarmid held the belief that the artists' role was to educate the masses, Finlay looked eagerly to contemporary Scottish folk culture, both rural and urban, as a rich source for artistic possibilities, and sought to forge an aesthetic amalgamating the ironic and droll strain of avant-gardism with the traditionalism of folk culture. This motivation, however, gained him adversaries within the Scottish literary milieu, Hugh MacDiarmid one among them. For MacDiarmid and many other writers affiliated with the Scottish Renaissance, the use of Scottish sentimentalism (as they saw it) was a retrogressive move back to the 'kailyard' and therefore a threat to diminish Scottish literary standing in the world; furthermore, they believed that Finlay's 'avant-gardism' smacked of an overly jocose populism in disrespect of their monumental nationalistic agenda. This attitude is perhaps succinctly stated by MacDiarmid in *The ugly birds without wings*: 'One only gets from literature and the arts in proportion to what one brings to them, and I have never sought to address myself [as Finlay and McGuffie has done] to the uneducated or undereducated, to juvenile delinquents, to beatniks and the like.'³¹² Yet Finlay found plenty of allies. As Alec Finlay posits, 'Together with his friend the poet and folk-singer Hamish Henderson and the Glaswegian poet Edwin Morgan, Finlay helped shape a Scottish avant-garde that was oddly homely, less a programmatic movement than a fey shoulder

³¹¹ A. Finlay, 'Introduction', p. 96.

³¹² MacDiarmid, *ugly*, p. 3.

pressed against the wheel of the moribund Scottish Renaissance'.³¹³ Exploring both Finlay's differences and similarities to MacDiarmid in their literary pursuits and activities, I will argue that *POTH* is an example of a cultural force which was developing in Scottish literature in the early 1960s, a force which in order to come to fruition needed to work out its relation to older literary attitudes established during the Scottish Renaissance.

POTH* versus *Lines Review

To begin my discussion of *POTH*, and to illustrate the ways in which the magazine was at variance with certain attitudes to new poetry within the Scottish literary milieu in the 1960s, I will briefly compare *POTH* with *Lines Review*, a journal dedicated to publishing Scottish poetry. I will then discuss how the differences between the two magazines shed light on the ideological disparities between Finlay and MacDiarmid, particularly in terms of their respective positions to historical avant-gardism and high modernism. *Lines Review* was founded in 1952 (ceasing publication in 1998) and was edited by eight editors during its lifetime, including Sydney Goodsir Smith, Robin Fulton, and Tessa Ranford. As Duncan Glen comments, '[*Lines Review*] has never been outrageous, or even avant-garde, but neither has it been a haven for conformity and bland traditionalism'.³¹⁴ The seventeenth issue of *Lines Review*, published in the same period as the inaugural issue of *POTH*, featured three of the same poets: Finlay, Morgan, and Alan Riddell. Yet the magazines are strikingly at odds with each other in their presentation of what can be called experimental poetry. Albert Mackie, the editor of this particular *Lines Review* issue, comments in his introductory essay:

In the present issues of *Lines* we have collected as many diverse examples as possible of how the young Scottish poets of today are attempting [to realise Ezra Pound's maxim of 'make it new'], and our

³¹³ A. Finlay, 'Introduction', p. 20.

³¹⁴ Glen, *Selected*, p. 142.

readers may judge how far they have been successful, what promise there lies in these efforts, what blind-alleys may lurk around the corner.³¹⁵

POTH, on the other hand, rather than contextualize its pieces in a mood of reservation or veneration, presents the works without editorial narrative. The opening piece published in the first issue is the poem 'The blue moor' by Pete Brown, here in its entirety:

Trenglooor muryrrr dyuumm
remglmmm myoor digrrym
gmumyooorrrmmmmmm gmum
zahum jahum drumm
Yehooooomm!³¹⁶

The poem exudes a sense of play, mischief, and irreverence. Encountering the poem as a ludic editorial to the entire issue, or as an opening gambit, we can see a marked contrast between it and Mackie's solemn vocabulary of literary 'success', 'promise', and 'blind alleys'. Whereas Mackie portrays the act of reading poetry as a series of value judgments based on a set of 'real world' criteria and precedents, the unconventional diction of *POTH*'s opening poem, evoking an unconventional world, requires the suspension of this very reality. The reader is invited to venture a guess at the poem's message and the words' relationship to its title, perhaps the only immediately intelligible element of the poem. Are the words a script for the sound-world of the blue moor? What is the significance of the exclamatory ending? Is the poem itself a sly commentary on our insistent desire to draw relationships between the poem and 'sense', to the 'real world'? The reader is left with no choice but to hazard the poem themselves, and to engage with the text at the most basic level, that of reading it out loud, often to comical effect: stretching out the long ooo's and mm's with the lips, curling the rr's with the tongue. Each unique recitation confirms the reader's role as a vital player in the sound and meaning-making of the poem.

³¹⁵ Albert Mackie, 'Editorial', *Lines Review* 17 (Summer 1961), 5-9 (p. 5).

³¹⁶ Pete Brown, 'The blue moor' *Poor.Old.Tired.Horse*. 1 (1962), p. 1.

At least one critic responded negatively to *POTH*'s experiments, on the very grounds which Albert Mackie asks audiences to judge the examples of new Scottish poetry published in *Lines Review*. Maurice Lindsay, in an article in the quarterly cultural review *New Saltire* ('The Anti-Renaissance Burd, Inseks an Haw'), views 'The blue moor' in *POTH* as a typical dispatch from the youthful 'Anti-[Scottish] Renaissance' movement whose 'most vocal protagonists seem to be Jessie McGuffie and Ian Hamilton Finlay'.³¹⁷ Comparing 'The blue moor' to MacDiarmid's poem *Water Music* (on the basis that both works are 'sound poems'), Lindsay praises the latter for 'extreme clarity of expression without sacrificing integrity' and accuses the former of 'sacrific[ing] subtlety of nuance in order to produce a more facile and ostensibly more popular, end product'.³¹⁸ In Lindsay's estimation, Finlay has disregarded the achievements of the Scottish Renaissance, instead opting to publish 'trivialities in the hope of being widely understood' which Lindsay believes runs against the artistic code of holding fast to 'seriousness of purpose'.³¹⁹ Finlay addresses this strain of literary analysis in a letter to Robert Creeley on 13 March, 1962:

There's never anyone who'll speak up for what is just Beautiful: they always need a didactic reason, and they always use literature in terms of 'importance', 'weight', 'influence', etc. – by which standards no Japanese poetry, for example, would have been preserved at all.³²⁰

Another significant difference between *POTH* and *Lines Review* is the way in which new works are contextualized within literary movements and traditions. Mackie is eager to enlist the young poets in issue within the venerable tradition of (male) experimental poetics, citing Eliot, Pound, Baudelaire, Coleridge, and Wilfred Owens as experimental poetics' chief architects. 'The search for new poetical devices is ever-fascinating,' he writes, 'Some of these which are popular with the young poets of today are not so new as they may

³¹⁷ Maurice Lindsay, 'The Anti-Renaissance Burd, Inseks an Haw', *New Saltire* 4 (Summer 1962), 61-67 (p. 61).

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

³²⁰ Ian Hamilton Finlay, letter to Robert Creeley, Stanford, Stanford University Libraries, MS Robert Creeley Papers, series 1

appear to be'.³²¹ In contrast, the affiliations which *POTH* draws between the new poetry and the old are not so much stated (owing to the lack of editorial), but demonstrated in the editorial strategy of printing the new and old poetry side by side. High modernist poets such as Pound and Eliot, however, make no appearance in *POTH*. If there is a consistent feature to the older poetry represented in the magazine, it is that they are affiliated with schools of historical avant-gardes: a few of the movements represented in *POTH* include Dadaism (Tristan Tzara), Surrealism (Francis Ponge, Apollinaire), and Russian Futurism and Constructivism (Mayakovsky, Khlebnikov, and Goncharova, among others). Although Finlay's association with the historical avant-gardes will be considered at more length in Chapter 5, it suffices to state here that *POTH*'s link to the historical avant-gardes signals a key disparity between *POTH* and the literary motivations of Mackie, Lindsay, and MacDiarmid. Mackie and Lindsay align themselves with the high modernist idea of the individual artist nurturing timeless ideals in asking whether new Scottish poetry can stand the test of time and join the ranks of the already established experimental tradition. Scott Lyall, in his analysis of MacDiarmid's high modernist sympathies, argues that 'The intellectual and artist [attains] cultural pre-eminence by separating themselves from the masses; the modernist now possesses individuality of a special, qualitative kind, while the mass, sheer quantity by definition, lacking determination and form except that given it by the intellectual, is Other'.³²² Certainly, Lindsay's claims that the poet's 'hope of being widely understood corrupts the very sources of artistic creation' and that 'the odds are that the vast majority of dockers, bus drivers and shop girls will not read his work' suggests the elitist aspects of high modernist thinking is at work in his own purview of literature.³²³ *POTH*, on the other hand, with its 'arts' for arts' sake' attitude to poetry (as Finlay says, he looks to what is 'Beautiful'), can to some extent be regarded as exhibiting the historical avant-gardes' stance to artistic creation.

Albert Mackie's editorial stance vis-à-vis new Scottish poetry and literary merit brings the project of the summer 1961 *Lines Review* close to aspects of MacDiarmid's elitist position regarding the rightful role of a few individuals,

³²¹ Mackie, p. 5.

³²² Scott Lyall, *Hugh MacDiarmid's Poetry and Politics of Place: Imagining a Scottish Republic* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p. 153.

³²³ Lindsay, p. 64.

such as himself, in dictating the shape of culture. Mackie wishes to know whether the new poetry will successfully live up to the (experimental) literary tradition, in his view last illuminated by the works of the high modernists Eliot and Pound. Undergirding his request to the readers to judge for themselves the success of the new poetry is, I believe, a conviction that the canon he evokes is the only reliable measure of contemporary poetry's value. MacDiarmid also subscribed to the belief that valuable art could only be created by a few, following in the footsteps of a few. He claims in his autobiography *Lucky Poet* (1943) that 'almost all my fellow-writers and other artists and members of the educated classes in Scotland' are incapable of 'taking anything (except their own petty vanity) "too seriously" – as if creatures like they could have any conception in any case of what a really serious concern with anything means at all!'³²⁴

Demanding a culture which '[i]n the words of T.S. Eliot [aims] "to unify the active and the contemplative life, action and speculation, politics and the arts"', MacDiarmid's vision of poetry is monolithic and challenging to say the least.³²⁵

Maurice Lindsay's dismissal of *POTH* as both ignorant and disrespectful of the literary achievements of the Scottish Renaissance aligns his views with MacDiarmid's position in the *POTH* flytings. Namely, Lindsay's opinion piece gives agreement to MacDiarmid's accusation that Finlay and his supporters are examples of 'the anti-culture that our culture has produced: the hatred of the arts and letters; the grudging enmity to the high culture of the past'.³²⁶

The summer 1961 edition of *Lines Review* demonstrates an attitude to new poetry which was not an uncommon tendency among literary discussions in the period: namely, the critique of a new work's *value* through precedents established by an older body of work.³²⁷ *POTH*'s eclectic assemblage of poetry and visual art, and the lack of explicitly stated connections between the works published in it – such as national affiliation, chronology, and the 'extent' and

³²⁴ Hugh MacDiarmid, *Lucky Poet* (London: Methuen & Co, 1943), p. 137.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 410.

³²⁶ MacDiarmid, 'Teddyboy', p. 15.

³²⁷ Duncan Glen suggests, however, that the idea of a small number of artists contributing to and upholding a Tradition, an idea to which MacDiarmid subscribed, was already beginning to be regarded as outmoded in the mid- 1960s by younger poets. Glen goes on to argue that as much as we may characterise MacDiarmid as a powerful representative figure of the movement countering *POTH* in the 1960s, his reputation as a major figure of Scottish as well as European literature had yet to be established in the 1950s and mid-1960s in the way that it is taken for granted today. (Glen, *Selected*, p. 132)

direction of experimentation – sets the magazine apart from *Lines Review*. The absence of an editorial meant that *POTH*'s literary aims were ambiguous; there is no overarching context within which the pieces are asked to be considered. The magazine's publication of new poetry alongside older poetry affiliated with the historical avant-gardes creates an impression of a poetry discourse that is cosmopolitan and erudite: the reader is invited to draw their own affiliative lines between the new and the old, whether those connections are in the spirit of radical experimentalism or not. However, the perception of a coolly intellectual, avant-garde radicalism is perhaps challenged by the overt sentimentalism of many of the works, and the inclusion of poets widely recognised as writing 'traditional' and even 'populist' verse, such as Scottish poets Hamish McLaren, Helen Cruickshank, and William McGonagall. What is constantly being demanded of the *POTH* reader, therefore, is an attitude to openness and flexibility to accommodate for the wide and eclectic range of poetries divided historically, stylistically, and geographically. Significantly, the boundaries between 'high' and 'low' art are continuously questioned via an emphasis on play and humour in both the content of the works and in their presentation.

MacDiarmid repudiated *POTH*, and Finlay's work more generally, precisely for the overarching playful element which often drew together in one issue aspects of tradition and avant-gardism, as well as 'high' and 'low' art forms. In an interview with Duncan Glen in 1968 MacDiarmid stated: 'I think [Finlay] is over-influenced by a fusion of kinds. It is not poetry; it is a combination of poetry and art and so on – with the emphasis on the art – the plastic arts I mean. And I think that is a bad thing. Whenever you have that fusion of the arts – or attempted fusion of the arts – it has always been a sign of decadence. In the history of European literature I mean'.³²⁸ MacDiarmid's intended insult of 'decadence' accurately diagnoses the characteristic of Finlay's work which perhaps most profoundly disturbed him: Finlay's propensity to view culture with irony and humour, which MacDiarmid likely interpreted as a self-indulgent and irresponsible attitude vis-à-vis the project of culture-building, and more specifically, the project of culture-building in Scotland. In light of MacDiarmid's

³²⁸ Duncan Glen, 'The MacDiarmids – A Conversation: Hugh MacDiarmid and Duncan Glen with Valda Grieve and Arthur Thompson, 25 October 1968', in *The Raucle Tongue: Hitherto uncollected prose Volume III*, ed. By Angus Calder, Glen Murray, and Alan Riach (Manchester: Carcanet, 1998), pp. 554-569 (p. 563).

rejection of Finlay's avant-gardism, Glen writes that MacDiarmid rejected 'the escapism of the Symbolists [as well as] that of Dadaists, Futurists, and Surrealists' because in their works 'words are disassociated from natural objects and specified means'.³²⁹ According to Stephen Scobie, it was in reaction to this particular outlook of culture which led MacDiarmid to describe Finlay's work as 'unimportant', since his own set of priorities for art was that it must be 'connected to politics or to philosophy, to Communism or to evolution [...] that is, connected to extra-literary criteria'.³³⁰ Scobie further suggests that MacDiarmid's claim that William Carlos Williams was 'too simply aesthetic [...] without a social awareness, without a political message, without a solid philosophical substratum' is a charge which MacDiarmid could have made against Finlay.³³¹

The comparison between *Lines Review* and *POTH*, the commentary by cultural and literary critics as Stephen Scobie, and MacDiarmid's own views on Finlay's work all highlight the fundamental disparity between Finlay's and MacDiarmid's attitudes to the function of art. An exploration of *POTH*'s editorial and distribution practices confirms these differences, and at the same time highlights the ways in which Finlay's literary approaches in the 1960s, and those of MacDiarmid in the 1920s, were strikingly similar. *The Scottish Chapbook*, which MacDiarmid edited in 1922, contained a manifesto of sorts listing his aims for the magazine. Two of the tenets were as follows:

To bring Scottish literature into closer touch with current European tendencies in technique and ideation

To encourage and publish the work of contemporary Scottish poets and dramatists, whether in English, Gaelic, or Braids Scots³³²

Finlay, too, espoused in the 1960s these dual aims to bring non-Scottish works to Scotland, and to publish work by current Scottish writers writing in a

³²⁹ Glen, p. 33.

³³⁰ Scobie, p. 57.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

³³² Hugh MacDiarmid, *Chapbook Programme*, reprinted in Margery Palmer McCullough, ed., *Modernism and Nationalism: Literature and Society in Scotland 1918-1939, Source Documents for the Scottish Renaissance* (Glasgow: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 2004), p. xii.

variety of vernacular dialects. Any discussion of the conflict of literary interests between Finlay and MacDiarmid must take into consideration the performative aspect of the two poets' flytings, which have largely figured in obliterating similarities between them, placing MacDiarmid and Finlay in the public imagination as diametrically opposed personas in Scottish literary history. Glen astutely observes that 'the opposition [Finlay] encountered from MacDiarmid and others at that time may have been an aspect of his motivation as a poet and artist in the same way the opposition met by MacDiarmid in the 1920s invigorated him'.³³³ Responding to the publication of *The ugly birds without wings*, Hamish Henderson identified MacDiarmid's actions as the 'monstrous conspiracy of the old against the young'.³³⁴ In the 1960s the literary scene in Scotland was fraught with tensions between (perceived) networks of poets and publishers. In such a milieu, the public skirmish around *POTH* can be regarded as an emblematic clash of ideological positions regarding the conceptualization of literature in Scotland. In the next two sections I will examine *POTH*'s publication of works written outside Britain and the use of vernacular dialects spoken in Scotland within its pages alongside a consideration of MacDiarmid's own outlook concerning these issues. To conclude, I will discuss how the Finlay-MacDiarmid dispute over literary 'elitism' and nationalism was representative of many of the public arguments taking place in this period concerning not only the content of poetry but its publication and distribution methods.

***POTH*'s internationalism**

Finlay's exposure in the early 1960s to American experimental poetry and to the international concrete poetry movement helped him to more clearly formulate aspects of his poetic aesthetic during this period. He enthusiastically published these new discoveries alongside his own works, and conceptualized *POTH*/Wild Hawthorn Press as an open-minded and international endeavour standing in opposition to the Scottish poetry 'establishment'. Finlay's friendship with Gael Turnbull, conducted primarily through the post, was particularly important in giving Finlay both the emotional and practical encouragement to establish a

³³³ Glen, *Selected*, p. 102.

³³⁴ Hamish Henderson, quoted in Timothy Neat, *Hamish Henderson : A Biography, Volume 2: Poetry Becomes People* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2009), p. 174.

poetry press and magazine aiming to publish works outside the remit of the British literary ‘establishment’. If Finlay during this period – loathsome of the Scottish poetry scene and constrained by his agoraphobia – desired contact with the wider poetic community, the well-connected Turnbull was to prove the perfect ally. Turnbull introduced Finlay to a number of American poets via little magazines and chapbooks; the poetries of Lorine Niedecker, Robert Creeley, and Louis Zukofsky in particular influenced Finlay and put him in touch with poetic techniques being practised and developed outside of Scotland. Finlay’s letters to Turnbull not only demonstrates the impact of experimental American poetry, but the development of his own editorial principles of publishing ‘beautiful’ and ‘pure’ poetry. On 25 February 1962 he wrote to Turnbull about the first issue of *POTH*:

Poor.Old.Tired.Horse. is off to the printer, and contains 2 of your poems, a long poem of Anselm Hollo, 2 Lorine’s, 2 Pete Brown’s, a Morgan translation [of a poem by Fyodor Tyutchev³³⁵], and 2 wee Finlays – one a poke at MacDiarmid, who is nowadays a nauseating anti-poetry pompous fool. Jessie tanked him in a new correspondence in the Scotsman, so I hear he is bringing out a special issue of *The Voice of Scotland* to annihilate The Wild Hawthorne Press... Well, he’ll have trouble on his hands. One thing I’m determined to do, is to make a wee space in this country for pure and beautiful lyric poetry to exist in – It’s certainly a bitter right to see all the people who haven’t spoken to me for years because of my ideas about poetry, come around cap-in-hand pleading to get published by the Wild Hawthorn [...] “And of course I’ll give you a wee mention when I speak on the wireless, because I know the producer’s brother...” Hell! Well, I’m just feeling bitter about the Establishment – if they don’t talk to you, at least they might have the decency not to cash in on your interest ... Fuck it all. I should stop worrying. On the other hand, it’s worrying that makes things work.

Turnbull was first introduced to Finlay’s work by his co-editor Michael Shayer, who on 26 February 1960 wrote to Turnbull that ‘one Finlay, from

³³⁵ Fyodor Tyutchev, Romantic-era Russian poet (1803-1873).

Edinburgh' had sent him two poems.³³⁶ Shayer, who was not impressed by Finlay's use of traditional metre and had told him as such, had consequently received an 'indignant' letter from Finlay and has his 'balls chewed off...for being patronising.' By 6 March 1960, however, Shayer wrote to Turnbull praising Finlay's poetry for its 'singing, tough, very individual rhythm underneath' and of its affinity to Robert Creeley's poetry. Turnbull included a selection of Finlay's poems in the sixth and seventh issues of *Migrant*, and by April 1960 had begun corresponding with Finlay by mail. The self-characterisation which Finlay provides Turnbull is that of a perennial outsider, a characteristic which Finlay attributes partly to a 'neurosis' (agoraphobia) which prevented him from leaving his home. In a letter on July 8, 1960, Finlay writes: 'My poetry is considered to be 'dangerous' in Scotland; it produces violent explosions. The establishment here is quite nasty.' Finlay wrote on August 27, 1960 with biographical details to be potentially used for the collection of poems, *The Dancers Inherit the Party*, which was to be published by Turnbull's Migrant Press that year:

If you want autobiographical details or not, is up to you to decide. I don't know what might be useful. I am age 34, have written plays, poems and stories, have worked as a shepherd, road labourer, farm worker, advertising copywriter, etc. Am good at catching trout and rabbits – och, I don't know, it all seems irrelevant. All that might be anyone. The point is, I don't write like other Scotch writers of now.

On the verge of having his book of poems published by an international-minded small press as Migrant, Finlay was disparaging about the role of biography in aiding communication of his work. What he wanted relayed was the sentiment that he did not 'write like other Scotch writers of now', positioning himself in stark contrast to contemporary Scottish writers.³³⁷

³³⁶ Michael Shayer, letter to Gael Turnbull, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Gael Turnbull Collection, Acc. 12552, folder 1. All subsequent letters from Shayer are from this source.

³³⁷ *The Dancers Inherit the Party* (1960) was Migrant Press's most successful publication; after the first edition of 200 sold out, a second edition was issued in early 1962. Significantly, in a letter from 24 November 1960, Finlay condemns Turnbull for having sent a review copy of the book to MacDiarmid. According to Yves Abrioux, the book was poorly received in Scotland, though as Turnbull notes, it was popular in America, at least among his circle of correspondents as Creeley, Niedecker, and Robert Duncan; the American critic Hugh Kenner had the poems

Through correspondence with Turnbull, Finlay also began to formulate a vision of a poetry magazine and small press which could effectively communicate his own idiosyncratic perspective on poetry, and importantly, place him in a position to become actively involved with poets outside of Scotland, such as those he had been introduced to via Turnbull. As Richard Price observes, ‘Shayer and Turnbull showed Finlay that it was relatively easy to set up a pamphlet imprint [...] and that a magazine was also relatively easy to manage’.³³⁸ McGuffie emphasised in an interview, however, that Finlay’s sense of the kind of material he wanted to see in print was secure before he began correspondences with poets and editors attuned to American poetics. Certainly the contact with Turnbull, Shayer, and Cid Corman, editor of the American little magazine *Origin*, was cherished by Finlay. ‘Partly [due to] his agoraphobia,’ noted McGuffie, ‘[and] being stuck in one room all this time, and to feel so oppressed by the Scottish literary set-up, [...] to find people that he could correspond with [and who] could understand what he was talking about, and there would be a mutual interchange, was very liberating for him.’³³⁹ In a letter from August 1960, Finlay asked Turnbull to send him books by American poets William Carlos Williams, Robert Duncan, and any magazines which Turnbull found interesting. Impressed by Robert Creeley’s little magazine *Black Mountain Review*, Finlay wrote in a letter to Turnbull on 24 November 1960: ‘There must be some (a few) very nice people in America, or even a whole class or strata? Nothing of that sort could be done [in Scotland].’ In the same letter, Finlay disparagingly commented on the ‘Scottish Literary Scene’ (citing *Lines Review* as what he saw as the typical example), although he expressed approval of the little magazine *Sidewalk*, whose new editor Alex Neish in 1959 had published two issues on American Beat poetry. In a letter from July 5, 1961, Finlay wrote: ‘You know, I have been thinking a lot lately about how much I owe to you and Michael for your encouragement ... [the] American poets, Creeley, [Ed] Dorn, etc. – I feel that they are my brothers.’ The output of the American little magazine editors prompted Finlay to recognise the feasibility of establishing his

reprinted in *The National Review*, and the entire collection was also reprinted in a *New Directions* annual review.

Yves Abrioux, *Ian Hamilton Finlay: A Visual Primer* (London: Reaktion Books, 1985), p. xi.

Gael Turnbull, ‘Dancing for an Hour’, *Chapman* 78-79 (October 1994), 3-9, (p. 6).

³³⁸ Richard Price, ‘Migrant the Magnificent’, *PN Review* (Jan-Feb 2007), 30-34, (p. 32).

³³⁹ Jessie Sheeler (formerly McGuffie), interview with author, 20 January 2012.

own magazine (with McGuffie), and widened his support-network of like-minded poets.

As much as *Migrant* and *Origin* and their affiliated presses impressed Finlay, there are some indications in his letters to Turnbull that much of what Finlay wanted to see in print remained unpublished. In a letter postmarked 5 July 1961, Finlay noted to Turnbull, 'I'd like to bring out a new collection of wee poems called *Whistling in the Dark* – but Lord knows who would do it.' On 14 August 1961, Finlay again voiced appreciation for Shayer's and Turnbull's *Migrant* venture:

I wish *Migrant* could bring out a collection of Scandinavian modern poetry in general. I'm trying to translate some Swedish stuff now- but I'd like to see [Anselm] Hollo do a whole collection, etc. Anyway, *Migrant* has been about one of the most important things that ever happened to me poetry-wise, and don't think I'm kidding.³⁴⁰

In the same letter, he expressed a concern that although broadening his poetic aspirations, the American little magazines failed to provide an artistic niche:

I feel a bit upset at the moment – [I] thought that via *Migrant* I was going to find (in *Combustion*, *Outcry*, etc.) “my crowd” – a wee harbour to rest in, and be understood – but now I see that I'll never really belong anywhere, poetically- not with the posh Hollos nor the middle ones, either. My kind of complexity is not the sort that appeals to more than a few individuals. I suppose really, the new ‘free’ poets are just as stuck and conventional (in their way) as the academics – the people who like my stuff are few, but those who like it, like it fine. Funny, they always suppose that everyone else will too. So did I – once!

³⁴⁰ Anselm Hollo, Finnish poet and translator who in this period was involved with small poetry-publishing ventures like *Migrant* Press.

By the time of this letter's writing in the summer of 1961, Finlay's and McGuffie's Wild Hawthorn Press was in the process of being established. Finlay ends the letter: 'In Rousay [in Orkney, Scotland] there's a lovely old mill for sale for £200 – we could buy it... [and] turn one floor of the mill into a publishers: Migrant/Wild Hawthorn – what say you?' Despite this dream of a joint-publishers' cottage industry never coming to fruition, Finlay's discouragement over the Scottish literary scene, and his own aspirations to see in print his work alongside the work of those he admired, had found an elegant solution in his and McGuffie's establishment of the Wild Hawthorn Press in the autumn of 1961, and *POTH* in January of 1962. It is highly likely that his correspondence with Turnbull, and his exposure to various American poetry and little magazines via Turnbull, gave Finlay the impetus to start Wild Hawthorn Press and *POTH*, where his 'kind of complexity' would find articulation in print.

Turnbull's support carried over after the establishment of Wild Hawthorn. In a letter postmarked 6 July 1961, McGuffie wrote to Turnbull to request use of *Migrant*'s mailing list and some quotes 'from somebody like Robert Duncan or Creeley or somebody you know who likes Ian's poems' in order to publicise what was slated to be Wild Hawthorn Press's first publication, Finlay's *Whistling in the Dark*.³⁴¹ The book never materialised, but in its stead Finlay's *Glasgow Beasts, An a Burd, Haw, An Inseks, An, Aw, A Fush*, was published. The book was attributed as a 'Wild Flounder' publication, the 'sister imprint' to Wild Hawthorn which McGuffie noted published 'the crazy things, the Dadaist stuff.'³⁴² The work consisted of 11 'animal poems' accompanied by papercuts by John Picking and Pete McGinn, and was dedicated to Shimpei Kusano.³⁴³ In a letter to Austrian poet Ernst Jandl in 1964, Finlay described the poems as 'eleven tiny poems entirely in the Glasgow dialect, which is considered very improper, and uncouth. I based these poems on the Japanese *tanka*.'³⁴⁴ Ken Cockburn sublimates the poems' unorthodoxy when he writes that the poems 'belong [...] to a tradition of Scottish animal poems which goes all the way back

³⁴¹ Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, TS Gael Turnbull Collection, Acc. 12553

³⁴² Magnus Magnusson, 'In a Bedsitter, an outlet for stifled poetry and prose', *Scotsman*, 12 February 1962, p. 4.

³⁴³ Shimpei Kusano, Japanese poet (1903-1988).

³⁴⁴ Ian Hamilton Finlay, letter to Ernst Jandl, reprinted in 'Letters to Ernst Jandl', *Chapman* 78-79 (October 1994), 10-16 (p. 11).

to Henrysoun's *Morall Faibillis*'.³⁴⁵ The influence of Kusano, who was known as the 'frog poet' in Japan and to whom Finlay dedicated the book, was arguably the greater influence upon Finlay, who purposefully made textual overtures to poets outside Scotland in order to position himself within his own country as an innovator.³⁴⁶

Finlay saw in much of the American poems which Turnbull introduced to him examples of what he called 'beauty' and 'purity', characteristics which he himself aspired to achieve in his own poetry, despite the dearth of examples he found in the Scottish literary milieu. Writing to Turnbull on 5 July 1961 requesting poems by Zukofsky, Finlay noted:

The more I see of American poems, etc., the more I feel they have arrived at much the same conceptions as I have, in my own wee way, rather home-made, and AGAINST everything I was taught to do by other Scotch writers. I think Lorine Niedecker's poems are superb. I am fair touched.

Wild Hawthorn's second publication was a collection of poems by Niedecker, with whom Finlay began correspondence in early 1961. Niedecker, who lived on the remote Black Hawk Island in Wisconsin, was a self-prescribed social outsider who nevertheless maintained prolific letter correspondences with experimental poets and little magazine editors in America such as Zukofsky, Cid Corman, and Turnbull.³⁴⁷ Jenny Penberthy writes that for Niedecker, reading Finlay's early poems was an 'affirmation of her folk aesthetic'; on 26 August 1961 Niedecker wrote to Zukofsky, 'I can't make out that [Finlay's and McGuffie's] press is interested in much else but short poems close to the earth

³⁴⁵ Cockburn, p. xxiv.

³⁴⁶ Finlay's evocation of Kusano as an emblem of the 'international avant-garde' will be explored further in this chapter.

³⁴⁷ In fact, it was Zukofsky who had urged Turnbull to introduce Finlay and Niedecker to each other's work. Zukofsky wrote to Turnbull on 12 December 1960 describing Finlay as a 'Scots LORINE NIEDECKER.' (Turnbull, 'Dancing', p. 7).

and people and everyday events [...]³⁴⁸ Niedecker's *My Friend Tree* was published by Wild Hawthorn in late 1961, with an introduction by Ed Dorn and linocuts by Walter Miller, a friend of Finlay's from an advertising agency in which he had worked at in the 1950s. The press next published Zukofsky's collection of poems (*16 Once Published*) in 1962, followed by a collection of British concrete and sound poetry (*Fish Sheet-One*) and Turnbull's *A Very Particular Hill* in 1963. Finlay's discovery of a like-minded poetic aesthetic of 'wee'-ness, 'home-made', and 'folk' in Niedecker was reflected in the production of the early Wild Hawthorn publications and in issues of *POTH*. Apart from publishing those American poets he encountered via Turnbull and admired, the early Wild Hawthorn publications, though professionally produced in off-set lithography, captures the 'folk' aesthetic with the use of woodcuts and in the case of *Fish Sheet-One*, the use of string-binding.

In his correspondence with Creeley, Finlay more specifically articulates the ways in which the work of Creeley and other American poets he was exposed to during this period gave him insight into the kinds of poetics he aspired towards. He writes to Creeley on 20 August 1962:

It begins to become clear that [William Carlos]Williams/LZ [Zukofsky]/and you, are a tradition, or way... Well now, there are two things here, first a concern for language, culture, and what I'd roughly call decency; secondly, the movement of the poem, syntax, structure... This is what I can't get hold of at present; I understand it perfectly in you, and the others; but in myself [...] there is also a complete confusion about structure, in that the kind of rhythms, based on rhyme [...] have stopped, and I have this silly but real feeling that all that has become rhetoric ...³⁴⁹

In this letter Finlay particularly extols the form of Creeley's poems, and the marriage, as he sees it, of 'decency' – what he calls a concern for culture – with the structure of the poems. In another letter on 8 December 1962, Finlay praises

³⁴⁸ Jenny Penberthy, 'A Posse of Two: Lorine Niedecker and Ian Hamilton Finlay', *Chapman* 78-79 (October 1994), 17-22, (p. 18).

³⁴⁹ Ian Hamilton Finlay, letter to Robert Creeley, reprinted in *A Model of Order: Selected Letters On Poetry and Making*, ed. by Thomas A Clark (Glasgow: WAX366, 2009), p. 14.

Creeley for his use of ‘natural rhythms, American, etc.’ Aspects of Kant’s theories about the aesthetic value of the arts in *Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgement* have resonance with Finlay’s consideration of poetic form’s desired effects. Comparing poetry – what he sees as the highest form of art – to rhetoric, Kant writes:

I must confess that a beautiful poem has always given me a pure enjoyment, whereas reading the best speech of a Roman popular speaker or a contemporary speaker in parliament or the pulpit has always been mixed with the disagreeable feeling of disapproval of a deceitful art, which understands how to move people, like machines, to a judgement in important matters which must lose all weight for them in calm reflection.³⁵⁰

In his letter to Creeley, Finlay worries that his own poems are a kind of ‘rhetoric’, whereas in Creeley’s work, he sees a ‘strong and real’ connection between the poet and the form of the poem which prevents the work from becoming a series of didacticisms. Finlay’s phrase ‘real connection with a kind of structure’ is what produces in Kant ‘pure enjoyment’. For Kant, beauty ‘consists in the form, which is purposive for observation and judging, where the pleasure is at the same time culture and disposes the spirit to ideas, hence mak[ing] it receptive to several sorts of pleasure and entertainment.’³⁵¹ The ‘movement’ which Finlay so admired in Creeley’s poems can furthermore be equated with what Kant calls ‘charm and movement of the mind’, which for the German thinker was the hallmark of good poetry.³⁵²

We can speculate therefore that from the American examples of poetry of Niedecker, Creeley, and Zukofsky, among others, Finlay was given assurance of the existence of a ‘way’, or an alternative tradition, distinct from the practices of the ‘Scotch writers’ which he despairingly noted to Turnbull in his letters.

POTH, in publishing the work of the American poets, along with numerous other

³⁵⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Powers of Judgement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 205.

³⁵¹ *Ibid*, p. 203.

³⁵² *Ibid*, p. 205. The ideas of ‘beauty’ and ‘purity’ will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 5.

poets outside of the dominant Scottish poetry circles of the 1960s, directly reflects Finlay's discovery of alternative poetic traditions of 'beauty'. A number of poets were found by McGuffie and Finlay by contacting international heads of state including Mao Tsetung, Fidel Castro, and Adolfo Lopez Mateos, the president of Mexico, although this method seems to have been an exception rather than the rule. Most of these queries received no response; McGuffie recalls that Mateos wrote back to ask whether she and Finlay preferred 'Apollonian or the Dionysiac' poets.³⁵³ Castro, however, replied and suggested that Finlay and McGuffie get in touch with the Cuban consulate in Glasgow, Cesar Lopez Nuñez, who wrote poetry. Nuñez's poem appeared in the second issue of *POTH* alongside works by poets from France, Shetland, Italy, Scotland, England, and the US. The location of the poet was printed in parenthesis after the work, perhaps as a measure of drawing attention to both the disparity and similarities between the works published in a single issue.

As Finlay had engaged in correspondence with American poets in conversation about the forms of experimental poetry and publishing activities from the early 1960s, from the mid-1960s he began to correspond with concrete poets such as Ernst Jandl, Eugen Gomringer, and the Noigandres poets (a collective of Brazilian concrete poets) as well as with visual artists associated with the 'international avant-garde' such as Victor Vasarely and Ad Reinhardt.³⁵⁴ Finlay's affinity with concrete poetry is reflected in the sixth issue of *POTH*, where the back page devoted to 'Concrete Poems from Brazil' featured poetry by Marcelo Moura, Pedro Xisto, and Augusto de Campos. Thereafter, concrete poetry featured consistently in the magazine. Finlay's connection to concrete poetry and visual art went hand-in-hand with his interest in the historical avant-gardes, which had been developing prior to his introduction to concrete poetry. Many concrete poets regarded as their forerunners poets associated with historical avant-garde movements as Symbolism, Futurism, and Dadaism, from which Finlay himself had drawn inspiration in his work during this period. It is likely that his encounter with the concrete poets was a key factor in the change of emphasis in Wild Hawthorn's conceptualization from 1962 onwards. A catalogue for Wild Hawthorn publications included as an insert in the twelfth

³⁵³ Jessie Sheeler (McGuffie), interview.

³⁵⁴ A. Finlay, 'Afterward', pp. 95-96.

issue of *POTH* lists the publications under the heading ‘international avant-garde publications’, whereas in previous catalogues the same publications had not been constituted as such. Another factor contributing to the change in emphasis was McGuffie’s relocation to the US.³⁵⁵ Wild Hawthorn’s alignment with the concrete poetry movement, and to the ‘international avant-garde’ generally, was therefore a conscious choice made by Finlay to empathically signal an aesthetic affiliation with an international, experimental movement and as a way to formalize his project’s distance from the literary insularity he detected in Scotland.

Yves Abrioux writes that Finlay’s ‘deliberate connection with [the] literary avant-garde’ concluded when his own works began to take divergent paths from the concrete poetry ‘party line’.³⁵⁶ This claim suggests that Finlay, as he had never found his ‘crowd’ in the American little magazines, likewise felt that he could not adhere strictly to any prescribed artistic traditions. Alec Finlay writes to this point that Finlay ‘from the beginning [...] understood the [Concrete] movement had many aspects and possibilities’, and that he ‘cast his own poems in terms drawn from schools of art, to suggest the different “purities” of Concrete’.³⁵⁷ The eclectic content and varying format of *POTH* attests to Finlay’s desire to formulate an idiosyncratic artistic vision which appropriated elements from literary and visual movements without wholly subscribing to them. In the 1960s, however, concrete poetry was a new and international art and literary movement which Finlay enthusiastically embraced. Morgan writes that under concrete poetry’s ‘alternative title of “visual poetry” its possible or actual links with painting, sculpture, and architecture spoke directly to the artist in Finlay’.³⁵⁸ McGuffie emphasizes that the inclusion of visual poetry corresponded with *POTH*’s editorial policy of openness: the juxtaposition and eventual melding of visual elements with text was part of the attempt ‘to bring in a bit of light – and beauty which was lacking.’ Drawing a distinction between

³⁵⁵ Sheeler states that on her part, the inclusion of concrete poems and publication of works by such visual poets as Apollinaire and Mayakovsky was *not* considered as a deliberate alignment of Wild Hawthorn to the historical international avant-garde. The reconstitution of Wild Hawthorn as an ‘international avant-garde’ press from 1962 onwards was therefore orchestrated by Finlay.

³⁵⁶ Abrioux, p. 4.

³⁵⁷ A. Finlay, ‘Introduction’, p. 30.

³⁵⁸ Morgan, ‘Early’, p. 21.

POTH and *Lines Review*, which she felt followed a formulaic template, she expresses the desire on her and Finlay's part to demonstrate for the reading public in Scotland the variety of approaches to form and content with which poets and artists, near and far, were experimenting, and in fact had been previously outside of the 'literary tempo' of Scotland's literary milieu.³⁵⁹

Initial public response to Wild Hawthorn and *POTH* were mixed. Morgan praised both ventures in *Scotsman*, calling the latter 'an attractive monthly broadsheet of new poems, international in scope and cheap in price, with the title (or anti-title) "Poor.Old.Tired.Horse."' ³⁶⁰ It is significant that from its inception, *POTH* was linked to the Scottish literary anti-Establishment movement, and in particular, that it was connected to Morgan, who was to be an indefatigable spokesperson for a younger generation of writers in Scotland, not the least Finlay's literary and artistic activities. Alec Finlay writes that the close working relationship between Finlay and Morgan made possible the publication of experimental literature in the early 1960s in Scotland: 'In terms of critical attention a lamentable sense of dislocation stands over this period of experiment. Both Finlay and Morgan have their place in Scottish culture, yet this formative period in their work, the closeness of their collaboration, and the influence of the ideas they were able to introduce into Scotland are rarely acknowledged. North of the Tweed literary revivals are seldom based in literature alone.'³⁶¹ Other critics, however, were not as accommodating as Morgan. Maurice Lindsay in *New Saltire* criticized Wild Hawthorn publications as an example of philistinism, and suggested that *POTH* should amend their title to *PYTV*: Poor.Young.Trite.Verse.³⁶² W.A.S. Keir in *New Saltire* commented that Wild Hawthorn's second publication, Niedecker's *My Friend Tree*, consisted of 'pretentious [...] neo-surrealistic scrawls'. Furthermore, Wild Hawthorn in general was censured for its 'gimmicky publishing tricks, the typographical eccentricities, the illustrations which look like Rohrsbach ink-blots perpetrated by absentminded lab boys, the general mess of minimal amateur versifying at its

³⁵⁹ Jessie Sheeler (McGuffie), interview.

³⁶⁰ Edwin Morgan, 'Poet and Public', *Scotsman*, 12 May 1962, p. 4.

³⁶¹ A. Finlay, 'Afterward', pp. 95-96.

³⁶² Maurice Lindsay, 'The Anti-Renaissance Burd, Inseks an Haw', *New Saltire* 4 (Summer 1962), 61-67, p. 66.

very worst'.³⁶³ MacDiarmid, responding to Morgan's praise of *POTH*, wrote into *Scotsman* a few days later to express disapproval of the magazine, writing that 'The broadsheet Mr. Morgan finds 'attractive' strikes me on the contrary as utterly vicious and deplorable.'³⁶⁴

Finlay and McGuffie responded to MacDiarmid's letter by comparing the literary situation in Scotland to that of Russia ('Hugh MacDiarmid is a "Stalinist"'), and by suggesting that the 'teddyboys' which MacDiarmid had attacked were in fact contributors to the 'Scottish "Thaw"' whom they deemed was part of an international phenomenon. MacDiarmid's singular vision for Scottish poetry, they claimed, was in direct opposition to the international propensity of the 'Thaw':

Hugh MacDiarmid also finds our four-weekly broadsheet, 'Poor.Old.Tired.Horse.', to be 'utterly vicious and deplorable'. We won't argue about this. We'll just point out that the current issue has translations from the Russian 'futurist' poet Mayakovsky, the venerable Japanese 'dada' poet Shimpei Kusano (now in his sixties), the young Finnish poet Tuomas Anhava, and the late Attila Jozsef, Hungary's most famous modern poet. It also has poems by Jerome Rothenberg, leader of the U.S.A. 'deep image' group, six poems by George Mackay Brown, of Scotland, a Karl Kraus-like piece by the Glasgow writer Lesley Lendrum, a poem sent from Honolulu by Cid Corman, and ones sent from Paris by David Ball [...] The next number of this 'utterly vicious and deplorable' broadsheet, edited by 'self-pitying' us, will have new poems from Cuba and Shetland, as well as new translations from these notorious 'teddyboy' poets, Leopardi and Apollinaire.³⁶⁵

Replying to Finlay's and McGuffie's letter, MacDiarmid commented that Finlay's listing of the current issue's international contributors 'only serves to show the lack of substantive creative work. Poetry does not live by poets taking

³⁶³ W.A.S. Kier, 'Poets, poetasters, bards and/or makers', *New Saltire* 4 (Summer 1962), 82-85, p. 82.

³⁶⁴ MacDiarmid, 'Teddyboy', p. 15.

³⁶⁵ Ian Hamilton Finlay, 'Letter to Editor', *Scotsman*, 19 May 1962, p. 6.

in each other's washing in this way.³⁶⁶ In stating that a vast majority of magazines calling themselves international 'are 'simply cosmopolitan', MacDiarmid is here asserting that 'internationalism' is being used, by such young editors and poets as Finlay, as a badge for contemporariness and sophistication; however he argues that this is not necessarily correlative to the *quality* of the pieces themselves. Walter Kier takes a similar line of argument in his review of Edwin Morgan's *SOVpoems* in an article for *New Saltire* in the summer of 1962, in which he repudiates Morgan's claim that *SOVpoems* is part of a new attempt to open up Russian poetry to the West. Noting that earlier efforts had been made by Western editors and writers to popularize Russian poetry,³⁶⁷ Kier, in the same vein as MacDiarmid's criticism of *POTH*, aims to diminish Morgan's work as a failed attempt at self-aggrandisement on terms of its purported 'new' cosmopolitanism.

It was in *The ugly birds without wings* that MacDiarmid's condemnation of Wild Hawthorn reached its apotheosis. The internationalist outlook of Finlay and Wild Hawthorn is dismissed with: 'A few words of praise from someone whose opinion goes for nothing in any connection, published in a hole-and-corner periodical on paper (appropriately) resembling toilet-paper is scarcely international recognition'.³⁶⁸ He accuses Finlay's evocation of Shimpei Kusano as a 'device to suggest a non-existent internationalism, a world scope, which Finlay has not begun to possess'.³⁶⁹ He continues, 'Finlay intends, it is stated, to have his book translated into Japanese. That will not increase his stature one iota. The poems will not read any better in Japanese or any other language'.³⁷⁰ MacDiarmid's accusations are echoed in Maurice Lindsay's commentary piece on *POTH* in *New Saltire* where he identifies Finlay as an example of Scottish 'ambitious youngsters [who] scramble for the international bandwagon'.³⁷¹ MacDiarmid's attack in *The ugly birds without wings* of Finlay's literary ambitions in looking beyond Scotland, however, is insincere in light of MacDiarmid's own internationalist outlook as a younger poet. As MacDiarmid

³⁶⁶ Hugh MacDiarmid, 'Letter to Editor', *Scotsman*, 22 May 1962, p. 6.

³⁶⁷ Kier, p. 84. Although he does not give names, Kier is likely thinking of MacDiarmid's activities in the 1930s.

³⁶⁸ MacDiarmid, 'ugly', p. 5.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁷¹ Lindsay, p. 66.

elaborated in his Chapbook Programme in 1922, he too looked outside of Scotland for literary inspiration, seeking to ‘bring Scottish literature into closer touch with current European tendencies in technique and ideation’. However, it was arguably more on the basis of ideation rather than technique that MacDiarmid himself looked to the ‘European tendencies’, whereas for Finlay, as I will suggest, international ‘tendencies’ – not limited to European – were predominantly of interest to him in regard to providing lessons in formal technique.

Finlay’s and MacDiarmid’s interest in the work of Russian futurist poet Vladimir Mayakovsky may be taken as a point of investigation to assess the disparity in Finlay’s and MacDiarmid’s stance vis-à-vis the internationalist approach to poetry. According to Ian Bell, Mayakovsky embodied MacDiarmid’s dictum that ‘the poet must be *both* of and for the people’, and in the works of the Russian poet he saw ‘a way of addressing political issues directly in poetry, and a way of communicating these very complex but profoundly important matters as simply as possible to an audience, without being patronising or obscurantist’.³⁷² Bell persuasively argues that MacDiarmid’s attraction to a particular aspect of Mayakovsky’s work – the promotion of the idea of the people’s poet – must be contextualized within the ‘Scottish literary tradition of directness of address’, which MacDiarmid envisioned himself to belong, in the company of Robert Burns, Robert Fergusson, and John Maclean.³⁷³ MacDiarmid sees a parallel between Mayakovsky’s activities in the Soviet Union and his own desire to produce an enlightened mass art in Scotland. MacDiarmid writes in his essay ‘The Ideas Behind My Work’ that Mayakovsky’s work personified the ideal ‘practical activities’ of the poet in his ‘capacity for using poetry as a weapon in the day-to-day struggle of the workers, with no scruples in using extra-literary means, in organising rows and literary scenes, in doing everything *pour epater les bourgeois*’.³⁷⁴ Bell notes, however, that the Mayakovsky which MacDiarmid evoked in his writing was a figure

³⁷² Ian Bell, ‘Hugh MacDiarmid: Lenin and the British Literary Left in the 1930s’, in *British Poetry 1900-1950: Aspects of Tradition*, ed by Gary Day and Brian Docherty (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), pp. 151-168 (p. 160 and p. 159).

³⁷³ Ibid, p. 158. Robert Burns (1759-1796), poet; Robert Fergusson (1750-1774), poet and an influence on Burns; John Maclean (1879-1923), radical socialist and Marxist educator.

³⁷⁴ MacDiarmid, *Lucky Poet*, p. 357. *pour epater les bourgeois* translates as ‘shock the middle classes’, and is a phrase attributed to the late 19th century Decadent poets.

constructed to suit MacDiarmid's vision of the poet's role, and hence was essentially a caricature based on limited information about Mayakovsky's complex relationship with Russian politics, literary or otherwise.³⁷⁵ We may therefore speculate that the prevailing agenda for MacDiarmid in the 1930s, in looking to Mayakovsky and other poets writing outside of Scotland, was not only to modernise Scottish literature and to bring it up to speed with international literary currents, but to promote the perception of the poet as a leader within society, who would bestow the Scottish people – particularly the working classes – with 'enlightened' political and social ideas.

Finlay's interest in Mayakovsky, on the other hand, did not centre on such ideas as the role of art in politics or the poet's figure within society, but rather on the aesthetic possibilities indicated by Mayakovsky's poetry and cartoons in terms of using vernacular rhythms and images as a poem's structural basis. Two Mayakovsky poems, translated by Edwin Morgan into Scots, were published in the second issue of *POTH*; Mayakovsky's line drawings also appear in the eighth 'Russian avant-gardes' issue. Finlay's letter to Hamish Henderson on 24 February 1960, although not mentioning Mayakovsky by name, demonstrates the likelihood that Finlay's interest in Mayakovsky was not based upon the Russian poet's individual poetic career per se, but upon his involvement with the Russian avant-gardes' experiments with language and image in his work. Finlay writes:

Do you know of any Russian poets of the time of the painters Larionov, Goncharova etc.? They used street-folk-speech (such as I horrified local folk by doing in *Glasgow Beasts*), and the painters, too, were crazy on folk art, and USED it in their work [...] Of course, the thing is, to use-not to duplicate from outside, but to make from, by understanding. We are surely very narrow if we understand only one culture (they talk of two cultures, but it seems to me there are twenty two. And all of value[]'.³⁷⁶

³⁷⁵ Bell, p. 159.

³⁷⁶ Ian Hamilton Finlay, letter to Hamish Henderson, quoted in Neat, p. 173.

Interestingly, Finlay's desire to 'make from' folk art, rather than merely duplicating it, is not far from MacDiarmid's formulation for the poet to be 'of' the people for whom s/he writes. However, the difference between MacDiarmid and Finlay in respect to empathy and responsiveness to 'folk' culture is that while MacDiarmid in the 1930s emphasises a connection between the poets' output with the material experiences of the 'masses' (in the poem 'The Seamless Garment', he identifies in particular with the working class), Finlay is more concerned with the aesthetic possibilities provided by speech patterns and art forms laying outside the premises of 'official' culture. In other words, while MacDiarmid looked to Mayakovsky as a model for socially responsible poetry, Finlay very likely looked to Mayakovsky as an example of the ways in which rhythms in vernacular speech could be used to artistic effect in poetry, without explicitly commenting (as MacDiarmid did) on the intended moral effects of such a poem.

Morgan's introduction to his collection of Mayakovsky's poems, *Wi the Haill Voice* (1972), may give some insight into Finlay's own attraction to the uses of 'street-folk-speech' by the Russian avant-garde poets, as well as to his overall interest in the uses of folk idiom rhythms in poetry, Scottish or otherwise. Morgan explains why he has decided to translate Mayakovsky's poetry into Scots:

There is in Scottish poetry (e.g. in Dunbar, Burns, and MacDiarmid) a vein of fantastic satire that seems to accommodate Mayakovsky more readily than anything in English verse, and there was also, I must admit, an element of challenge in finding out whether the Scots language could match the mixture of racy colloquialism and verbal inventiveness in Mayakovsky's Russian.³⁷⁷

For Morgan, Mayakovsky's language has 'peculiar value' because it possess 'a grotesque and vivid comic fantasy' coupled with 'central human concern' such

³⁷⁷ Edwin Morgan, *Wi' The Haill Voice: 25 Poems by Vladimir Mayakovsky* (Oxford: Carcanet, 1972), pp. 16-17.

as pain, loneliness and longing.³⁷⁸ Quoting a passage of MacDiarmid's poem 'Gairmscoile' which declares that the Scottish vernacular language 'Hae keys to senses lockit to us yet', Morgan sees that poetries using vernacular languages are often successful in tapping, with humour, wit, charm, and cynicism, into the heart of the human experience which is inflected with those same characteristics.³⁷⁹ To this end he sees a parallel between Russian and Scots. Furthermore, Morgan detects an enduring freshness in Mayakovsky's formal arrangements of his poems, characterised by what he [Morgan] calls 'wild *avant-garde* leanings': 'We see the interaction [in his poetry] of eye and ear – the line-breaks doing a certain amount of visual 'enacting' of the meaning but also suggesting that the poem must be read aloud in a certain way'.³⁸⁰ The audio-visual innovations which Morgan detects in Mayakovsky's work were also likely appreciated by Finlay, who at the time of publishing Russian avant-garde poetry in *POTH* was developing his interest in concrete poetry.

Finlay's appeal to see the value of numerous cultures in his letter to Henderson – who undoubtedly shared this belief – gives insight into his overall curiosity and attentiveness to poetries written outside of Scotland. In looking overseas, Finlay sought to escape what he considered to be the stifling literary measures by which the value of poetry was considered: namely, the promotion of one kind of poetry over another on the basis of its didacticism, and the degree of adherence as he saw it to a narrow criterion determined and maintained by specific members of the Scottish literary field. Yet MacDiarmid, whom Finlay deemed as the embodiment of Scottish literary narrow-mindedness – an image which MacDiarmid himself encouraged in his public ripostes to *POTH* and Finlay in the 1960s – was in the earlier part of his career a vehement advocate of opening Scotland to the literary activities of the wider world. Duncan Glen notes that 'by the 1940s, or even the 1930s, MacDiarmid had ceased to be a creative writer of new major poetry';³⁸¹ we may surmise, therefore, that in the 1960s much of his literary energies were devoted to 'organising rows and literary scenes', the very activities he admired in Mayakovsky. It is therefore not difficult to imagine MacDiarmid's anger over reading Finlay's letter to *Scottish Field* in

³⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 13-14.

³⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 17.

³⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 13-14 and p. 12.

³⁸¹ Glen, *Selected*, p. 102.

1962: ‘The Renaissance talked a great deal about not being provincial, but so far as I know this will be the first time in this century that Scottish poets will be printed side by side with new (and older) poets from the USA, Germany, Cuba, Hungary, Japan, Russia – the world.’³⁸² Finlay’s claim that the Scottish Literary Renaissance did not live up to its international agenda likely incensed MacDiarmid as its chief spokesman. Finlay’s statement can be construed as a kind of poetic *coup d’état*, in which a new generation of Scottish poets repudiated the activities of an older generation and declared an intention to fully realise aims which they believed had been neglected. In our examination of MacDiarmid’s and Finlay’s interest in the work of Mayakovsky, fundamental differences in motivation were explored in the two Scottish poets’ internationalist literary outlooks. In many ways, *POTH* was a kind of public commonplace book for Finlay, a means by which a myriad of poetic approaches from numerous nations could be demonstrated to the Scottish public, partly as a measure to counter the notion of singular literary value. In the poetry of American poets such as Creeley, Niedecker, and Zukofsky, the work of the Russian avant-gardes, and in the works of Japanese poets such as Shimpei Kusano and Tatsuji Miyoshi, Finlay detected a way in which the rhythms and idioms of vernacular speech could be used to produce works of beauty.

The Use of Vernacular Scots in *POTH*

Finlay wrote to Hamish Henderson on 24 February 1960:

Do you have any interest [...] in the *possibilities* of Folk [in poetry]? I tried to use the long folk line [in the poem ‘Angles of Stamps’], with a kind of *ironical sophistication*, and it seems to me this *use* of folk –i.e., a deliberate use of it, putting it to use, has a lot of possibilities. As has the use of actual Scots, Glasgow Scots and so on’.³⁸³

³⁸² Ian Hamilton Finlay, ‘Scottish Poets’, Letter, *Scottish Field*, May 1962, p. 19.

³⁸³ Ian Hamilton Finlay, letter to Hamish Henderson, quoted in Neat, p. 173.

As he had been inspired by the use of ‘street-folk-speech’ in the work of the Russian avant-gardes as Mayakovsky, Finlay saw the potential of using ‘actual Scots’ (Scots currently in use) in poetry. His writing of these lines to Hamish Henderson is significant, as Henderson had been actively involved in educating the wider public about Scotland’s folk culture since the early 1950s, both in his role as a field-collector of Scottish songs and in an academic capacity as a member of the newly formed School of Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh.³⁸⁴ Significant, too, is Finlay’s proposal to use colloquial language with ‘ironical sophistication’, highlighting an apolitical approach to appropriating the rhythm and movement of folk culture in poetry. This can be seen as a deliberate move away from the debates concerning the use or non-use of Scots in the bid to advance Scottish national identity, a central concern of the writers of the Scottish Renaissance.

MacDiarmid vs. Muir vs. Finlay

MacDiarmid was a vocal apologist for the use of vernacular Scots in literature, albeit a synthetic Scots amalgamating various regional Scots including antiquated dialects. He noted that ‘there is a tendency in world-literature today which is driving writers of all countries back to obsolete vocabularies and local variants and specialized usages of languages of all kinds’.³⁸⁵ In other words, MacDiarmid perceived the use of vernacular Scots as a crucial method of modernizing Scottish literature, bringing it up to date with the current literary trend of appropriating antiquated regional dialects and vocabularies. This of course rested on the belief that the dying or dead languages contained within it

³⁸⁴ *Alias MacAlias: Writing on Songs, Folk and Literature* and *The Armstrong Nose: Selected Letters of Hamish Henderson* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2004) provide rich accounts of Henderson’s work in the Scottish folk revival of the 1950s and 1960s. Henderson was, to a much greater degree than Finlay, concerned with the debates over the uses of ‘Plastic Scots’ (or as otherwise known as ‘synthetic Scots’, Braids Scots, or Lallans) in literature. In his first letter to Hugh MacDiarmid, written in 1947, Henderson attached an unpublished letter he had recently written to the editor of *Glasgow Herald* which concluded: ‘Most [Scottish poets] realize... that it is not enough merely to use the ‘language of the outlaw.’ Like their compeers of former ages, they must also re-create and reshape it.’

Hamish Henderson, letter to Hugh MacDiarmid, reprinted in *The Armstrong Nose: Selected Letters of Hamish Henderson*, ed. by Alec Finlay (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1996), p. 11.

³⁸⁵ Lyall, p. 37.

unadulterated, idiosyncratic attitudes to life which had been obliterated in the standardization of languages. MacDiarmid wrote:

We have been enormously struck by the resemblance – the moral resemblance – between Jamieson’s Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish language and James Joyce’s *Ulysses*. A vis comica that has not yet been liberated lies bound by desuetude and misappreciation in the recesses of Doric: and its potential uprising would be no less prodigious, uncontrollable, and utterly at variance with conventional morality than was Joyce’s tremendous outpouring [...] This explains the unique blend of lyrical and the ludicrous in primitive Scots sentiment [...] and the essence of the genius of our race, is, in our opinion, the reconciliation its effects between the base and the beautiful, recognising that they are complementary and indispensable to each other.³⁸⁶

Finlay for his part viewed MacDiarmid’s synthetic Scots as a ‘weird compound’ which was ‘animated by some freak electric energy’.³⁸⁷ Edwin Muir also took this view, and his description of MacDiarmid’s experiments utilises similar Frankensteinian allusions to applying electricity to inorganic matter with futile or even disastrous consequences. He wrote in *Scott and Scotland* (1936): ‘MacDiarmid has recently tried to revive [Scottish poetry] by impregnating it with all the contemporary influences of Europe one after another, and thus galvanize it into life by a series of violent shocks’.³⁸⁸ Muir believed that however impressive MacDiarmid’s efforts were, ultimately this method was bound for failure, leading him to declare his famous statement that ‘Scots poetry can only be revived, that is to say, when Scotsmen begin to think *naturally* in Scots. The curse of Scottish literature is the lack of a whole language, which finally means the lack of a whole mind’.³⁸⁹ For Muir, the creation of a national Scottish literature could only be achieved through the use of English, one of two

³⁸⁶ Hugh MacDiarmid, ‘Causerie: A Theory of Scots Letters’, *Scottish Chapbook* 7, Volume 1 (February 1923), pp. 182- 183.

³⁸⁷ A. Finlay, ‘Introduction’, p. 24.

³⁸⁸ Edwin Muir, *Scott and Scotland* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1982), p. 9.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

‘complete and homogenous languages’ (the other being Gaelic) in wide use in Scotland containing potential for producing ‘a complete and homogeneous Scottish literature’.³⁹⁰ As for the non-Gaelic Scottish vernacular dialects, Muir maintained that ‘when we insist on using dialect for restricted literary purposes we are being true not to the idea of Scotland but to provincialism, which is one of the things that have helped to destroy Scotland’.³⁹¹ For Muir as with MacDiarmid, the ‘language question’ lay at the heart of the issue of Scottish national identity in the 1930s. Yet whereas MacDiarmid envisioned synthetic Scots as part of Scotland’s bid for international literary recognition, Muir believed that poetry written in a variety of regional dialects only succeeded in splintering national cohesion, highlighting the absence of a central language which he maintained was a necessary ingredient in the development of a truly national Scottish literature.

Finlay, in proposing to use vernacular Scots with ‘ironical sophistication’, distances his literary project from MacDiarmid’s and Muir’s debates concerning the relationship of language to the posterity of Scottish literature. The use of Glaswegian Scots in *Glasgow Beasts* and the publication of poetry in various Scots dialects in *POTH* does not conveniently match either MacDiarmid’s or Muir’s position regarding the advantages or disadvantages of using vernacular Scots in bolstering Scotland’s literary standing or social unity. What the poems do reflect are Finlay’s literary experiments in the early 1960s of testing whether poetry’s use of ‘street-folk-speech’, that is, non-standardized dialects currently spoken day-to-day in particular regions of Scotland, can allow a poem to structurally, rather than didactically, communicate certain moods and styles of humour, perhaps analogous to the ways in which wordless music is capable of conveying emotion.³⁹² In other words, Finlay is interested in vernacular Scots as an aesthetic device, and as a means to innovate the structure of poetry. The tension between the past and the present which exists in any language – that is, the question of whether a language can respond to our changing relationship to

³⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 111.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

³⁹² Indeed, Alec Finlay notes that Finlay’s interest in vernacular dialects (not limited to Scots) was one chapter of Finlay’s search to formulate new approaches to the syntax and structure of a poem, and that the vernacular speech experiments anticipated his turning to Concrete poetry. This shift in focus from ‘folk speech’ experiment to concrete poetry experiment is reflected in *POTH*. (A. Finlay, ‘Introduction’, p. 26.)

the world around us – but which is perhaps more keenly felt in increasingly marginalised or dying languages, is appropriated in many of the works in Scots published by Finlay. In some cases, the poem self-mocks its language; in other cases, the idiosyncratic sonic qualities and use of native idioms contribute directly to the mood of the poem. In all cases, vernacular Scots is shown to have both contemporary and aesthetic uses, contesting Muir's belief that the use of Scots in contemporary poetry is necessarily anachronistic and backward-looking.

In a set of unpublished notes discussing some early poems (later collected as *Glasgow Beasts* (1966)), Finlay clarifies his technique of using the folk line with 'ironical sophistication'. Describing the poem 'Black Tomintoul', Finlay writes, 'Another influence in the poem is that of Glasgow. The Glasgow idiom, like the comedians Laurel and Hardy, is always sophisticatedly and warmly ironic, always delightedly parodying itself'.³⁹³ In another set of notes, he writes, in reference to his poem 'Archie, The Lyrical Lamplighter':

The poem has a deliberate and casual construction. The first two lines of each verse RHYME, while the verses end alternately with the words JOKE and STORY. Within these limits, the MOVEMENT of the poem is carefully AWFUL, and has a sort of glottal Glasgow slouch.³⁹⁴

The self-awareness of a poem as a poem, and the acknowledgement of its structural artifice, means that vernacular Scots for Finlay must also be used ironically, albeit with warmth and with a sense of delight. One may speculate to what extent Finlay's own youthful itinerant childhood contributed to his curiosity about the aesthetic possibilities of vernacular Scots. Born in the Bahamas and having spent much of his youth relocating between Glasgow, Perthshire, and the Highlands, Finlay ostensibly found himself at a remove from Scottish dialects and from the communities who spoke them. He wrote to Cid Corman on 18 July 1975: 'To those who have been displaced from (social) language by life, the problem of composition is not perhaps essentially different from the problem of

³⁹³ A. Finlay, 'Afterward', p. 107.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

translation'.³⁹⁵ Here, Finlay draws an analogy between the task of producing meaningful poetry and the task of effectual translation which aims to capture the essence and mood of the original work. Essentially, the problem which Finlay addresses to Corman concerns the risks taken in utilizing any language in attempting to illuminate what Morgan calls 'central human concerns' in his Mayakovsky translation notes.

Vernacular Scots and Literary Nationalism

Finlay's dismissive attitude to the debate concerning the relationship between vernacular Scots to Scottish nationalism is demonstrated in his book review in the Spring issue of *New Saltire* of John Speirs's *The Scots Literary Tradition: An Essay in Criticism*. In the review, Finlay suspects that there is a large divide between academic perception of life in Scotland and actual experiences of those living there. He flags up a particular passage in which Speirs writes:

What survives of a (living Scottish) speech among what survives of the peasantry is in its last stages and is even something its speakers have learned to be half-ashamed of [...] Burns's poetry represents what in Scotland [...] has been destroyed. Nothing like it is possible now, because the conditions that make a vernacular verse of any kind possible no longer exist.³⁹⁶

Disagreeing vehemently with Speirs's diagnosis that vernacular languages are on the cusp of disappearance and perceived by its 'last' speakers with embarrassment, Finlay takes this passage as emblematic of a certain type of academic myth-making, in which a problem is falsely diagnosed for the sake of creating a lore of a romantic national past. Finlay refutes both Speirs's claim that

³⁹⁵ Ian Hamilton Finlay, quoted in A. Finlay, 'Introduction', p. 272. Interestingly, Sydney Goodsir Smith, who came to prominence in the Scottish literary scene in the late 1940s with his poetry written in Scots, was also not a native Scots speaker.

³⁹⁶ Ian Hamilton Finlay, 'Review of *The Scots Literary Tradition: An Essay in Criticism* by John Speirs', *New Saltire* issue 4 (Summer 1962), p. 79.

the waning Scottish vernacular is limited to rural parts of Scotland and is regarded with shame, and MacDiarmid's argument (made most pointedly in his long poem *A Drunk Man Looks at a Thistle*) that the *popular* use of vernacular languages only functions to negate Scotland's bid for modernity. Finlay closes the article:

MacDiarmid may blame Burns for Harry Lauder (and what was wrong with Harry Lauder anyway?) as though no other country but Scotland had ever had a vernacular comedian. The fact is that Scotland is not a special case, except in the minds of most of its literary critics – and some of its poets, alas. The tradition is there. Get with it! Enjoy it. This is your life.³⁹⁷

Finlay proposed that vernacular Scots can be utilized in poetry not as a feature of the past, but as a living, contemporary force replete with aesthetic possibilities. The folk revival, and increased popular interest in live and recorded performances of poetry and song in the late 1950s and early 1960s, ostensibly helped to transform public opinion that Scots should reside exclusively in the domain of academics. Morgan writes:

The MacDiarmid 'renaissance' of a general synthetic Scots fifty years ago can still be felt, and learned from, but the move should now be towards the honesty of actual speech, and in the decade which has been a decade of spoken and recorded poetry and the poetry-reading explosion, this is indeed what has been happening.³⁹⁸

In Finlay's formulation, if anything is to be mocked via the ironic use of 'street-folk-speech', it is the literary impulse towards 'sophistication', an attitude which deems that literature exists only within the realm of the elite and learned, and explicitly addresses 'weighty' issues as nationalism. In this respect, it can be

³⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 81.

³⁹⁸ Edwin Morgan, *Essays* (Cheadle Hulme: Carcanet New Press, 1974), p. 178.

argued that Finlay's thinking about the 'warmly ironic' use of dialect finds resonance with Robert Burns's use of Scots in such poems as 'Epistle to J. Lapraik', wherein a decidedly 'non-literary' speech is utilized specifically to critique the affectation of the literati. The politics of Burns's use of vernacular Scots, however, is arguably less explicit in Finlay's use of Scots in his own works. Finlay's proposal to use Scots with deliberation speaks more to a discrete desire to put vernacular Scots to aesthetic use rather than for proselytism.

Arguing that the experience of art is an 'aesthetic end in itself', Russian formalist critic Viktor Shklovsky writes that

Poetic language is distinguished from practical language by the perception of its structure. The acoustical, articulatory, or semantic aspects of poetic language may be felt. Sometimes one feels the verbal structure, the arrangement of the words, rather than their texture'.³⁹⁹

Transposing Finlay's ideas about the ironic use of 'street-folk-speech' with Shklovsky's formulation, we may speculate that one use of the vernacular in poetry is as a formal means of artistic expression, rather than as a means to 'tap' into any innate nationalistic sentiment. Finlay remarked to Robert Creeley in a letter: 'Your poetry is very Scottish, not that it's like how [Scottish] poets write, but how they *ought* to write if they made a proper use of their moral past [...] As for moral, I mean like Tolstoy is moral, not when he is *moralising*, but when he does that amazing thing of presenting a moral statement as a physical sensation'.⁴⁰⁰ Here, as when he praised Creeley in an earlier letter for using 'natural [American] rhythms' in his poetry to create works of 'actual substance', Finlay seeks to use vernacular speech as a way to embody the poem's 'search' for beauty, and as a way to lend the poem a sense of musical movement. Finlay's aim to separate the use of dialect in poetry from nationalistic agenda is demonstrated in his response to Speirs's unequivocal praise of MacDiarmid's work as the contemporary realisation of a Scottish tradition dating back to

³⁹⁹ Viktor Shklovsky, quoted in Boris Eichenbaum, 'The Theory of the "Formal Method"', in *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, ed. and trans. by Lee Thomas Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), pp. 99-140, (p. 114).

⁴⁰⁰ Ian Hamilton Finlay, letter to Robert Creeley, quoted in A. Finlay, 'Introduction', p. 26.

Dunbar. Vetoing Speirs's vote for MacDiarmid, Finlay caustically elects Louis Zukofsky as the more rightful heir to 'Scottish' purity: 'in his longer [...] poems, with their pure melody, their limpid strength, the American poet Louis Zukofsky is infinitely closer to being Back – or Forward – To Dunbar than MacDiarmid the poet has ever been'.⁴⁰¹

Vernacular Scots in POTH and Glasgow Beasts

Finlay's interest in the aesthetic possibilities of using 'street-folk-speech' is reflected in the early issues of *POTH*. Poems by Alan Riddell (Issue 1), Robert Garioch (Issue 3), Veng (Issue 3), and Helen Cruickshank (Issue 4), among others, are written in a variety of Scots, including Glaswegian and Shetland dialects. These works, ranging from lyrics to colloquial accounts of working-class life, vary widely in tone and subject matter. Riddell's poem 'Stewed', for example, tells the (apocryphal) tale of how Scottish engineer James Watt was inspired to invent the steam engine:

Polly pit the kettle on.
 Would Polly'd tuik it aff again!
 This warld, ye ken, is no a laff
 sin Jamie Watt saw things by hauf
 and made an enjun oot o' dreams.
 'Fu' steam', he cried, 'the tea can wait.
 There's mair nor supper on the grate.
 The pressure's risin'. It's a treat
 to see the po'er ye get frae heat.
 I shuldne wunner, wife, gif I've

⁴⁰¹ Finlay, 'Review', p. 80. Finlay here is referencing MacDiarmid's famous phrase, 'Not Burns, Dunbar!', a rallying call to look to the Scots Makars (late medieval poets) rather than to Robert Burns (whose works in MacDiarmid's eyes has accumulated sentimental value for the public) as a model for literature.

discovered sumphn. Mon alive!’

Ay, Polly pit the kettle on,
the boilin’ kettle o’ the sun.⁴⁰²

Here, the tension of reconciling Scotland’s urbanising present with received ideas of its provinciality is dramatized through imagery and tone. In a comedic move, one of modern Scotland’s great sons, James Watt, is portrayed as a country husband who discovers the source of industrial power by sheer luck. Ironically, it is ‘Jamie Watt’’s surreptitious discovery by the hearth which has brought momentous change, for better or for worse, to the livelihood of many: ‘This warld, ye ken, is no a laff/ sin Jamie Watt saw things by hauf/and made an enjun oot o’ dreams.’

In Robert Garioch’s poem ‘Scunner’, vernacular Scots serves an entirely different function. Rather than giving an ironic and whimsical account of the past, vernacular language is used in this poem to instil the contemporary Scottish urban experience it depicts with a sense of urgency and despondency.

Sinday nicht, and I’m scunnert wi ocht
I hae ever socht, or wished, or bocht;
my bit of life crined aa to nocht
but a sour taste, and a dour thocht.

Bells yammer: the kirk is bricht
wi thousand-watt electric licht.
My sowl blinters in the fricht
of its ain mirk, on Sinday nicht.⁴⁰³

⁴⁰² Alan Riddell, ‘Stewed’, *POTH 1*, p. 2.

⁴⁰³ Robert Garioch, ‘Scunner’, *POTH 3*, p. 1.

The rasping consonance of the repeated end-rhymes does not endorse sentimentalism; nor does it evoke a sense of MacDiarmidian monumentality. The scene is irrevocably gritty, urban, and bereft of inspiration for magniloquence. Indeed, far from the verdure of the kailyard, the church – the literary symbol of Scotland’s evangelical spirit – is strangely bedecked with bright electric lights, as if on a construction site. The gaudy lights are accompanied by harsh metallic sounds (‘Bells yammer’); the speaker is thus left with a sour taste of ‘Sinday nicht’, with the recurring pun on ‘sin’ giving a direct commentary to the failed ‘legacy’ of Scottish Calvinism. These poems by Riddell and Garioch, appearing side-to-side in *POTH* with poems in standard English, demonstrate the possibilities for the contemporary usage of Scots, notwithstanding academic debate over the validity or even actual existence of its usage. The poems counter Muir’s pronouncement in *Scott and Scotland* that the contemporary poetic use of vernacular dialects are mere anachronisms, incapable of communicating contemporary ideas. Furthermore, Scots dialects are shown to be versatile and self-reflective, despite Muir’s purported claim that the vernacular is only capable of expressing emotion without critical apprehension.

Finlay’s *Glasgow Beasts* further demonstrates the experimental uses of the vernacular with the melding of Glaswegian Scots with Japanese haiku, music-hall banter, and woodcut illustrations. Alec Finlay writes that with this publication, Wild Hawthorn Press’s first output, Finlay became ‘the first British poet to bring together innovative poetic form and the potential of contemporary dialect’.⁴⁰⁴ Ostensibly MacDiarmid would have contested this statement, and would have likely elected his own work in synthetic Scots for such claim. In MacDiarmid’s *The ugly birds without wings*, chiefly a riposte against Finlay, the two poets’ attitudes to the role of the vernacular language in poetry is construed by MacDiarmid as being completely antipathetic. Claiming that Finlay referred to MacDiarmid’s use of Lallans as ‘anachronistic propaganda’, MacDiarmid writes that ‘[Finlay] presumably means by that my advocacy of Lallans as a medium for modern literary purposes, and also perhaps is referring to my

⁴⁰⁴ A. Finlay, ‘Introduction’, p. 24.

Scottish Nationalism'.⁴⁰⁵ In MacDiarmid's view, therefore, Finlay's critique of MacDiarmid's use of the vernacular is a conflation of *both* the use of the vernacular in contemporary poetry as well as to literary nationalism more generally.

As we have seen, however, Finlay was compelled, as was MacDiarmid, by the possibilities of the use of vernacular language in creating innovative poetry. In his 'defense' of the use of Scots in his own work, MacDiarmid writes that

As with many leading workers in the arts today, my return to primitive and archaic techniques was not inspired by a nostalgia for the past, but by the desire to utilise some already existing method of expression to help towards the expression of my personal conception. This archaism (confined to a matter of vocabulary) is deliberate and self-conscious, 'a necessary stage' (as Jean Metzinger said) 'in preparation of a new movement'.⁴⁰⁶

In his call to use Scots in a 'deliberate' and 'self-conscious' manner, MacDiarmid's aims chime with Finlay's motivation to use the vernacular with 'ironical sophistication'. However, beyond their perception of vernacular Scots as an innovative strategy in contemporary poetry, MacDiarmid's and Finlay's attitudes concerning the vernacular are divergent. Whereas MacDiarmid views his use of Scots as purposeful 'archaism' ('primitive and archaic techniques'), Finlay's perceived Scots as a *living* tradition ('I'm sick of FOLK as a dead thing'⁴⁰⁷). Another significant point of dissimilarity concerns MacDiarmid's identification of the use of vernacular for political purposes, i.e. Scottish Nationalism. As Scott Lyall points out, 'For MacDiarmid, writing in Scots achieves a depth and seriousness lacking in English because it facilitates access to the artistic, and hence national, psyche'.⁴⁰⁸ For Finlay, on the other hand, although he claimed that he wrote 'for the Scottish people, and [...] would rather

⁴⁰⁵ MacDiarmid, *ugly*, pp. 5-6.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁴⁰⁷ Finlay, 'Review', p. 80.

⁴⁰⁸ Lyall, p. 36.

be published in my own country than anywhere else,⁴⁰⁹ the use of vernacular was not intended for the advancement of nationalism, let alone any other political agenda. Finlay's disinterest in literary nationalism, and the unexpected appeal of *Glasgow Beasts* outside literary circles, were the impetus for MacDiarmid's claim in *The ugly birds without wings* that he did not wish for his own poetry to appeal to 'the uneducated or undereducated, to juvenile delinquents, to beatniks and the like.' Calling Finlay's use of Glaswegian Scots in *Glasgow Beasts* as 'language of the gutter,' MacDiarmid hyperbolically characterises Finlay's work, via the words of Jacques Barzun, as an act of 'renunciation which is a calculated, intrepid striving for purposelessness'.⁴¹⁰ For MacDiarmid, the apolitical use of vernacular Scots, as well as what he perceived to be an uneducated use of it, was a deep affront to the poetry of political commitment – and elitism – that he had envisioned for the Scottish Renaissance.

Elitism, Openness, and Viability

The dispute between Finlay and MacDiarmid in evaluating the direction of contemporary Scottish poetry was part of a larger conversation conducted during this period between poets, critics, publishers, and readers. The ground of debate was not limited to the assessing of poetic content, however: publication, distribution, and promotion of poetry were equally the topics of lively discussion in the press and media both in Scotland and abroad. Taken as a whole, these conversations sketch out a picture of a literary scene convulsed by varying proposals for change in the ways that poetry was to be made available to the public. The very fact that the expanding media was eagerly broadcasting these debates signals a shift: at least in appearance, the 'fate' of Scottish poetry was not to be determined in the confines of the literary boudoir, but to be forged in the public arena for all to witness. The popularity of the inaugural International Writer's Conference at the Edinburgh Festival in 1962, with its sold-out panels on such topics as 'Scottish Writing Today' (witnessing the famous public clash between MacDiarmid and Alexander Trocchi, in which MacDiarmid called the

⁴⁰⁹ Finlay, 'Scottish Poets', p. 19.

⁴¹⁰ MacDiarmid, *ugly*, p. 12.

younger poet ‘cosmopolitan scum’) bore important witness to the mounting popular interest in the discussion of literary matters in Scotland.

In an article by Magnus Magnusson entitled ‘In a Bedsitter, an outlet for stifled poetry and prose’ (1962) in *Scotsman*, McGuffie – portrayed as the sole proprietor of Wild Hawthorn Press – was placed in the company of *New Saltire* editor and pamphlet publisher Giles Gordon, and book and periodical publishers William MacLellan and Malcolm Macdonald. Magnusson reports that ‘the main purpose [of these publishers is] to break into what Jessie and many others in Scotland feel is a tightly-closed and exclusive monopoly of print by Scottish publishers and booksellers, who have to a dismayingly large extent ignored the Scottish literary renaissance of the last 30 years.’⁴¹¹ Here, Wild Hawthorn is contextualised as part of a movement of publishers and editors actively combating the close-mindedness and apathy of more major Scottish publishers who have refused to publish not only younger writers’ work, but Scottish modernist works more generally. Gordon, for example, is noted in the article for his recent publications of Iain Crichton Smith’s poetry and an essay by Hugh MacDiarmid, and Macdonald for his publication of poems by Sydney Goodsir Smith. Magnusson depicts Wild Hawthorn as a rare breed – a publisher of both international and recent experimental Scottish poetry – which in Magnusson’s view is as integral for ‘national cultural growth’.

Edwin Morgan paints a similar picture of the state of Scottish poetry publishing in a 1961 article in *New Saltire*: ‘The position for the young poet particularly, but even for the ‘established poet’ (if that adjective means anything), could hardly be worse that it is in Scotland’.⁴¹² Lamenting that ‘anywhere else in the world, a writer of MacDiarmid’s importance would have by this time a uniform or collected edition of his works’, he points out that recent poets such as Iain Crichton Smith, W. Price Turner, and Finlay have had to see their work published abroad or ‘in Scotland through one-man and ephemeral publishing ventures’.⁴¹³ In conclusion to the article, Morgan asked the chief Scottish publishers for an explanation of their publishing policies, and suggests further that they consider the recent interest in spoken poetry as a trend worth

⁴¹¹ Magnusson, p. 4.

⁴¹² Edwin Morgan, ‘Who Will Publish Scottish Poetry?’, *New Saltire* 2 (1961), 51-56 (p. 54).

⁴¹³ Ibid.

capitalizing on. Publisher A.S. Chambers's response was published in the subsequent issue of *New Saltire*: 'We are interested and we will continue to be, but it must invariably be limited, for the publishers in turn to ask 'Who will *buy* Scottish Poetry?' and they unfortunately know the answer all too well'.⁴¹⁴ Oliver & Boyd publisher's Ian Grant holds a similar view. Citing Walter Scott's poetry as the only truly popular (i.e. financially viable) Scottish poetic output in the last 130 years, Grant writes: 'The publisher is far from convinced that he can influence public taste, and is well aware that the twentieth century history of poetry publication in Scotland has been totally unrewarding financially'.⁴¹⁵ Furthermore, Grant denies Morgan's point about the rise of popularity in spoken poetry by stating that 'the more modern media of radio and television have seen but the barest recognition that Scottish poetry even exists'.⁴¹⁶

In spite of Grant's sombre view that Scottish publishers can only survive by meeting the demands of the (non-poetry minded) local market, Magnusson in his article portrays the publication of poetry by recently formed small independent publishers as a completely viable enterprise: 'Jessie McGuffie believes that people still want to read poetry, and that poetry can pay. Bringing out a pamphlet of poems costs about £30 or £40, and with direct selling it only needs a sale of about 200 copies to cover the costs'.⁴¹⁷ Furthermore, in a 1968 article in the little magazine *Akros*, Duncan Glen comments that the rising popularity of spoken poetry had created new publishing opportunities:

The oral movement has been one of the signs of an invigorating popular upsurge in interest in poetry, which in the United Kingdom seems to have had its beginnings in the north of England and in the English art schools with their non-literary and anti-middle-class attitudes. This oral 'Underground' movement, which has gone on to produce its own publishing outlets, has been an excellent resistance movement against the

⁴¹⁴ 'Who Will Publish Scottish Poetry?', *New Saltire* 3 (1961), 40-42 (p. 40).

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁴¹⁷ Magnusson, p. 6.

dated style and editorial views of over-powerful London publishers and their polite editors who showed no civility to poets.'⁴¹⁸

For Glen, the increasing popularity of poetry boded well for Scottish literature more specifically. If, according to Glen 'Scottish [publishing] firms have often acted as talent spotters for the large multi-national corporations with London offices', the popularity of spoken poetry in the 1960s equated to the surge of native publishing activity in Scotland (ostensibly assisted by the availability of cheaper printing methods).⁴¹⁹ Orality is therefore for Glen the key to invigorating Scottish culture, representing a synthesis of tradition (the underscoring of Scottish heritage via recognition of indigenous speech patterns) and innovation (the tapping into new audio/visual/print media such as radio, television, and cheaper and faster publishing methods).

Glen also notes that the restructuralization of the Scottish Arts Council (SAC) in 1967 was the single most significant factor in changing the landscape of literary magazine publishing.⁴²⁰ SAC's roles were various, from providing cash grants to literary magazines, paying for copies to be placed in Scottish public libraries, encouraging magazine publishers to create the Scottish Association of Magazine Publishers, and employing officers to promote these literary magazines in bookshops. Two direct results of these activities were the physical availability of more (different kinds of) poetry in Scotland, and the creation of platforms for critical discussion of these works. One magazine created by SAC funding was *Scottish International*, a magazine dedicated, according to Glen, to promoting 'the aesthetic and cultural aims of the radical poetry that stemmed from the work of the Beats poets, and [which] showed an interest in the ideas and work of Alexander Trocchi and Burroughs'.⁴²¹ Editor Robert Tait remarked in the editorial of the first issue of *Scottish International* in 1968:

⁴¹⁸ Glen, *Selected*, p. 25.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 141. From 1945 to 1967, the Scottish Arts Council (SAC) operated under the name of the Scottish Committee of the Arts under the auspices of the Arts Council of Great Britain. In 1967 the committee was renamed SAC and was given autonomy in allocating block grant-in-aids to cultural institutions in Scotland.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*, 143.

There is more money now for the arts in Scotland- at last, and, really, it ought to have come much sooner. But its effect, now it's here, is to make possible projects that wishing alone couldn't bring about. This magazine is one of them. It joins others which have had to exist on practically nothing for years. Its editors want to draw your attention to them right away – particularly *Akros*, *Gairm*, *Lines Review* and *Poor.Old.Tired.Horse*.⁴²²

In drawing a hereditary link between *POTH* and *Scottish International*, Tait highlights the fact that were it not for the recent availability of public arts funding, international, contemporary, and innovative poetry in Scotland would have continued to be published and disseminated via 'underground' channels. Significantly, with the exception of *POTH* (which ceased publication before SAC's reorganization), all the magazines mentioned by Tait in the editorial received SAC funding. SAC's decision to subsidize literary magazines aiming to publish and have critical essays about innovative poetry ostensibly reflects changing cultural tastes. Tellingly perhaps, Glen notes that MacDiarmid regarded *Scottish International*, with its promotion of Finlay's poetry as well as those of the 'so-called beatnik poets', as ruinous to the project of high art poetry.⁴²³

The 'Honour'd Shade Flytings' of this period exemplifies the changing landscape of poetry publishing in Scotland in three ways by demonstrating: 1) the role of arts council funding in making possible the publication of a 'major' poetry anthology and its distribution to libraries and schools 2) the increasing intersection of poetry with mass media technology such as cassette tapes and print media 3) the perceived polarization of 'poetry camps' as divided along generational lines, often as a result of misapprehension and rumour. In 1959, Finlay and six other poets,⁴²⁴ prompted by the rejection of their work by Norman MacCaig in his Arts Council-funded anthology of contemporary Scottish poetry, *Honour'd Shade* (1959), produced a tape-recorded anthology entitled *Dishonour'd Shade: Seven non-Abbotsford Poets*. A letter by the 'dishonour'd shade' poets was subsequently published in the correspondence column of

⁴²² Robert Tait, 'Editorial', *Scottish International* 1 (January 1968), 1-3 (p. 3).

⁴²³ Glen, *Selected*, p. 143.

⁴²⁴ Including W. Price Turner, Tom Wright, Stewart Conn, Shaun Fitzsimmon, Anne Turner and Tom Buchan. Duncan Glen calls this group 'a decidedly disparate seven'. (Glen, *Selected*, p. 27).

Scottish Field, asserting that the *Honour'd Shade* was an exclusive publishing organ of the 'Rose Street Group', a collective of Edinburgh poets who frequently congregated in the pubs on Rose Street (such as Milne's Bar), based their poetry on the Lallans dialect, and sought mentorship in MacDiarmid.⁴²⁵ Tom Wright wrote in an article in *Scottish Field* that because the 'Lallans boys' maintained a monopoly on editorial and critical positions in Scotland, poets outside this establishment were being consistently barred from both publication and publicization.⁴²⁶ MacDiarmid replied to these unverified statements by insisting that the exclusivity of the anthology was inherent in its selective nature, and that Wright and the 'Dishonour'd Shade' poets were in his opinion 'self-pitying *jeunes refusés*'.⁴²⁷ MacDiarmid's response further elicited a prolific exchange of comments and insults in the letter section of the *Scottish Field*, including several contributions from Finlay, who notably responded to a statement made by Warrington Minge, then-editor of *New Saltire* who wrote that 'It is imperative that a group emerges forward to succeed the Renaissance Movement. What MacDiarmid did in the 20s must be repeated and extended in terms of the Scotland of today and tomorrow'.⁴²⁸ Finlay condemned Minge's appeal for a new group, let alone one based on MacDiarmid's Renaissance blueprint, writing that 'A new group will probably be just as ungenerous as the old. *POTH* will print the old and the new, together'.⁴²⁹ The 'Honour'd Shade Flytings' demonstrates the ways in which Scottish popular media contributed to the formulation of a poetry publishing rivalry between MacDiarmid's camp and a more youthful camp united predominantly by their animosity for MacDiarmid's attitudes. This rivalry, however, was to a very large extent over-exaggerated and only contributed nominally to the actual picture of poetry publishing in Scotland in the 1960s, which was being shaped more significantly by a number of socio-

⁴²⁵ Lallans was also known as 'synthetic Scots', a literary dialect combining both vernacular and archaic forms of (many varieties of) Scots and standard English. Sidney Goodsir Smith is an example of a writer influenced by MacDiarmid and who frequently wrote in 'synthetic Scots'.

⁴²⁶ Tom Wright, 'Burns and the Poets of To-day' *Scottish Field* (Jan 1962), 19-21 (p. 19). Wright qualifies that Norman MacCaig was not a 'lallans writer', although he had, according to Wright, cemented his membership in the Rose Street Group by having claimed MacDiarmid as a more accomplished poet than Robert Burns. Wright further claims that the group's 'dogmas are based on the belief that Scottish poetry deteriorated because of the union with England'. (Ibid.)

⁴²⁷ Hugh MacDiarmid, 'Scottish Poetry', Letter, *Scottish Field* (February 1962), p. 10.

⁴²⁸ Warrington Minge, 'Scottish Poetry', Letter, *Scottish Field* (April 1962), p. 22.

⁴²⁹ Finlay, 'Scottish', p. 19.

economic forces such as the availability of arts council funding and the rise in interest in spoken poetry more generally in Britain.

If the ‘publication’ of the *Dishonour’d Shade* tape anthology reflected the growing interest in spoken poetry in this period, small poetry publishers in Scotland similarly responded to the changing cultural climate by diversifying their methods of distribution. Poetry was to be made available not only through the usual channels as bookshops and mailing lists, but on the street: in pubs, cafes, and on the radio. The 1960s saw a burgeoning culture of poetry and play readings in Scotland taking place in a variety of pubs and coffee bars. In Edinburgh, public arts venues such as Studio 3, founded by poet Lesley Lendrum, hosted events such as performances of Finlay’s short plays.⁴³⁰ A tactic which Finlay and McGuffie employed in order to make *POTH* accessible to a wider audience was to shift the emphasis of distribution method from exclusive mailing lists and small poetry networks to sales in pubs, cafes, and on the street.⁴³¹ Such a method was not unique; publisher William Maclellan and Edinburgh poet Howard Purdie were also experimenting with pub sales, though with not much success.⁴³² Finlay and McGuffie hired a team of boys to sell *POTH*; for each issue sold, they were paid a commission of a penny (each issue costs 9 pence). McGuffie comments, ‘You could be in a bar on Rose Street [in Edinburgh] and you could buy Salvation Army’s *War Cry* or you could buy *POTH*, and quite a lot of people might be interested in it.’ With no subscription lists, and apart from a few copies which were sold and mailed to the US, England, and Europe, distribution of the magazine was prioritised to the greater Edinburgh area.⁴³³ In this respect, the motivation for *POTH* was divergent even from that of Wild Hawthorn’s publications, which were advertised through Migrant’s mailing list, and therefore consciously attempted to reach an audience which was international and literary.

Finlay in his promotion of Wild Hawthorn played upon MacDiarmid’s elitist attitudes by planning a series of hoax protest marches in response to

⁴³⁰ Sheeler (McGuffie), interview.

⁴³¹ Ibid.

⁴³² Magnusson, p. 4.

⁴³³ Sheeler (McGuffie), interview.

MacDiarmid's recent flytings. In an article in the December 1963 issue of *Typographica*, monk and poet Dom Sylvester Houedard reported these strategies:

Things said about him on the BBC, in newspapers & pamphlets, have made him sound more like Tristan Tzara & Paris Dada than he could possibly be. Like Radio Newsreel⁴³⁴ reported that his airship, The Wild Hawthorn Zeppelin, was going to bombard the 1962 Festival Writer's Conference; his Wild Hawthorn March was banned by the Edinburgh magistrates; & a radio broadcast put out a rumour that 50,000 supporters of the Glasgow Rangers [football club] were going to demonstrate in favour of Shimpei Kusano, the Frog Poet & the Wild Hawthorn. The Canadian Radio came over to report the Zeppelin attack- they had, it seems, heard about it from the French Radio, Airship March & Demonstration, too beautiful to be true, were in fact entirely mythical.⁴³⁵

However fictitious the protest marches, Finlay's tongue-in-cheek coalescing of poetry to wider aspects of popular culture (football, Festival Writer's Conference) was part of a strategy to formulate an *alternative* to MacDiarmid's monolithic vision of poetry's exalted role as the edifier of culture. By promoting poetry as non-specialist, and decidedly unconventional and mischievous, Finlay's poetry protest marches challenged MacDiarmid's conceptualisation of the high seriousness of poetry. Finlay's writing to Lorine Niedecker that in response to MacDiarmid's flytings 'we are arranging a huge *protest march* with banners by *avant-garde* artists'⁴³⁶ demonstrates Finlay's imagining of a collective to which he belonged, a kind of en-masse people's movement fronted by artists who would take to the streets to defend their right to prosper under MacDiarmid's 'totalitarian' regime.

⁴³⁴ BBC news programme broadcast between 1940 and 1988.

⁴³⁵ Dom Sylvester Houedard, 'Concrete Poetry & Ian Hamilton Finlay' *Typographica* 8 (December 1963), 47-62 (p. 62).

⁴³⁶ Ian Hamilton Finlay, letter to Lorine Niedecker, quoted in Jenny Penberthy, 'A Posse of Two: Lorine Niedecker and Ian Hamilton Finlay', *Chapman* 78-79 (October 1994), 17-22 (p.21).

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Morgan's appearance on BBC Scotland in 1962 to discuss emerging Scottish poetry not only signalled the emergence of a cultural force which set its agendas in conscious counterpoint to the aesthetics and methods of an 'older' Scottish poetry faction, but also points to the broadening of the cultural debate concerning the directions of literature in Scotland. The establishment of the International Writer's Festival in 1962 and the proliferation of poetry readings in pubs and cafes in this period, often held in conjunction with folk and blues performances (the unofficial 'Edinburgh Folk Festival' was held for the first time in 1963), attests to the flourishing of youth cultures actively countering the authority of older and/or more established cultural institutions. Morgan summed up these attitudes in the article 'Beatnik in the Kailyard' (1962) in *New Saltire*, diagnosing the current literary climate as suffering from a 'new provincialism':

I am certain that Scottish literature is being held back, and young writers are slow to appear, not only because of publishing difficulties but also because of a prevailing intellectual mood of indifferentism and conservatism, a desperate unwillingness to move out into the world [...] of contemporary culture.⁴³⁷

Finlay's flytings with MacDiarmid is in many ways representative of the conflict Morgan outlines above. Finlay and MacDiarmid, however, were not attempting to realise their literary aims in a vacuum; both poets were affected by and actively responded to their particular social and economic climate. MacDiarmid's potent blend of Modernism, Nationalism, and Communism in his construction of a post-Kailyard Scottish literature was therefore woven inextricably into the historic situation in 1960s Scotland in which Finlay came into maturity as a writer and publisher. Like other Scottish poets after MacDiarmid, Finlay had to construct a response to the MacDiarmidian

⁴³⁷ Edwin Morgan, 'The Beatnik in the Kailyard', *New Saltire* 3 (Spring 1962), 65-74 (p. 73).

formulation of Scottish literature. Combining a ‘gently ironic’ stance to Scottish folk traditions with an international, avant-garde perspective, first looking to American examples then to Concrete Poetry, Finlay forged an idiosyncratic aesthetic which was a formidable answer to MacDiarmid’s monolithic vision of Scottish literature. *POTH* bears witness to the development of this aesthetic, and also records the ways in which he and MacDiarmid shared goals of continually renewing and developing creative directions. Two such methods, as discussed in this chapter, are the configuring of vernacular Scots and international influences in the construction of a contemporary brand of Scottish poetry.

Chapter Five: Play as Editorial Practice in *POTH*

After a visit to Finlay's flat at 24 Fettes Street, Edinburgh in May of 1963, Gael Turnbull noted in his diary the profusion of wooden toys there which Finlay had produced in his neighbour Cyril Barrow's shed: wooden toys such as 'model aeroplanes, trees, boats, even a toy tomb [...] One huge construction, meant to be a water wheel and mill, with lots of space to pour water [...] All of them painted cheerful colours.'⁴³⁸ Other toys included a row of fish hanging on a string, tugs, and a lollipop forest.⁴³⁹ Finlay often reflected on the relationship between toy-making and poetry-making in his prolific correspondences. In a letter to David Brown, he commented that he felt 'an absolute need to turn from the rhythmic to the static [...] and turned toward making little toys – things of no account in themselves, yet true to inspiration, which was away from Syntax toward "the Pure."⁴⁴⁰ He wrote to Dom Sylvester Houédard: 'The toy is not cold, but is also un-connected; i.e., it is pure. But brims with feeling. It is open in the right way.'⁴⁴¹ And in a letter to Turnbull on 10 June 1964: 'I want to start making toys again, so I can better remember how to keep words silent.'⁴⁴² From these statements we can speculate that toy-making played a role in Finlay's critical re-evaluation of the methods used in creating poetry, and perhaps even of his thinking about poetry's function for the individual and for society.

The dichotomy which Finlay establishes between 'syntax' (which we can understand as poetry) and 'purity' (the toy) in his letter to Brown suggests that for Finlay, using the toy as a model for poetics was one way of overcoming a kind of crisis over his – and other poets' – use of metaphorical language. Finlay used the toy as a point of comparison between desirable and undesirable poetry – that is, poetry that is inspired and 'open' vs. poetry which is prosaic and 'closed'

⁴³⁸ Gael Turnbull, *More Words: Gael Turnbull on Poets & Poetry*, ed. by Jill Turnbull and Hamish Whyte (Bristol: Shearsman Books, 2012), p. 161.

⁴³⁹ Some of these toys can be seen in *Some Early Toys by Ian Hamilton Finlay* (2009), with illustrations by Janet Boulton and commentary by Jessie Sheeler. Finlay's toys were not restricted to private viewing: they were exhibited at the home of experimental publisher John Calder in Fife, Scotland in 1963.

⁴⁴⁰ Ian Hamilton Finlay, letter to David Brown, quoted in Yves Abrioux, *Ian Hamilton Finlay: A Visual Primer* (Edinburgh: Reaktion Books, 1985), p. 10.

⁴⁴¹ Ian Hamilton Finlay, letter to Dom Sylvester Houédard, quoted in Stephen Scobie, 'The Side-Road to Dunsyre', *Akros 15, Volume 5* (1970), 51-61 (p. 55).

⁴⁴² Ian Hamilton Finlay, letter to Gael Turnbull, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Gael Turnbull Collection, Acc. 12553. All letters from Finlay to Turnbull in this chapter are from this source.

– but it also gave clues for a new art: a non-subjective experience which would give pleasure in the handling, both for the maker and the user. In a letter to Robert Creeley on 20th August 1962, Finlay wrote

[T]he poems I want to write are about three words long, but also that I don't feel how to put those words together [...] I suppose what I really want is for the words not to join into phrases but to be in space, each, as a sign, about a thing outside me ...⁴⁴³

Finlay's envisioning of words 'in space, each, as a sign' clearly anticipates the trajectory of his practise to concrete poetry (discussed later in this chapter), and to the poem-objects he would create on materials such as glass, and later, stones and other materials. That he wanted the poems to communicate a 'thing outside me' echoes his sentiment about the 'un-connected' toy, which does not intimate subjectivity, neither its own nor its maker's. The toy therefore is not only a *model* for poetry, but *is* a poem in its own right; as Finlay wrote to Turnbull on 29 April 1963, 'I feel that I have come – at least for the moment – to the end of poems that are about and want to do poems that just are.' Furthermore, in Finlay's vision the poem/toy evokes feelings directly rather than through the morass of syntax. In his discussion with Turnbull about what he called 'thingpoems', Finlay wrote on 12 May 1963: 'I want them to be simple objects, gay or sad, and no more complex than potatoes.' In another letter to Creeley, from 25th December 1965, he wrote

One would like [...] a kind of craft, to give each day a small satisfaction at least, and make sleep possible and food palatable. That was one reason I liked making toys – but that craft has rather vanished for me now [...] I began to feel it as an art, and that is the end of pleasure.⁴⁴⁴

Craft, or making, for Finlay is linked to 'pleasure', whereas art is considered a burden, presumably because of its linkage to the marketplace of the ego.

⁴⁴³ Ian Hamilton Finlay, letter to Creeley, reprinted in *A Model of Order: Selected Letters on Poetry and Making*, ed. by Thomas A Clark (Glasgow: WAX366, 2009), p. 14.

⁴⁴⁴ Ian Hamilton Finlay, letter to Robert Creeley, Stanford, Stanford University Library MS Robert Creeley Papers, series 1

Plato's critical assessment of poetry in *Republic* may give further clues to Finlay's rejection of 'art' and his opting for craft. The fluidity with which Finlay discusses poems/toys/craft in this period reminds us that there was no word in Ancient Greek identifying the 'arts' as a distinct field of making. Penelope Murray writes: '*Techne* covered anything from poetry, painting and sculpture to shoemaking, carpentry and shipbuilding, there being no linguistic or conceptual distinction in the Greek world, or in antiquity generally, between crafts and the "fine arts"'.⁴⁴⁵ In Book 2, 3, and 10 of *Republic*, Plato suggests that poetry is a genre of the 'imitative arts' which is thrice removed from 'knowledge of the truth': if the poet writes about a bed, he is merely copying the appearance of a bed made by a joiner, who in turn copies the 'idea' of a bed.⁴⁴⁶ In its tendency to imitate bad models, and its encouragement of bad habits in its audience, Plato considered poetry to be a dangerous activity and thus banishes it from his ideal state. Nickolas Pappas in his discussion of *Republic* suggests that the products of the craftsman, 'unlike artistic images, leave themselves receptive to rational inquiry. They allow themselves to be transcended, while artistic images make that transcendence impossible or unappealing.'⁴⁴⁷ In turning away from conventional, syntax-driven poetry, Finlay was perhaps evoking Plato's negative formulation of poets in *Republic*, and endeavoured instead to the role of the joiner, or craftsman, whose 'objective' creations were invitations for active engagement, both for the maker and the audience.

As Finlay considered the toy as an ideal poem, and aspired to the 'condition' of the craftsman over the artist, we may evaluate his magazine *Poor.Old.Tired.Horse.*,⁴⁴⁸ which he edited in this period, as crafted objects rather than merely as miscellanies of individual texts. Thus far, *POTH* has received limited critical attention on its own terms. This chapter aims to explore further Edwin Morgan's statement that *POTH* 'undoubtedly succeeded in its aim of opening Scotland out to new names and new ideas.' Morgan suggests that what he [Morgan] saw as abstruse connections between pieces in *POTH* are 'partly the connections within Finlay's own unformulated and formative view of

⁴⁴⁵ Penelope Murray, *Plato on Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 1.

⁴⁴⁶ Plato, *The Republic*, trans. by Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 347, 595b-c.

⁴⁴⁷ Nickolas Pappas, *Plato and the Republic* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 215.

⁴⁴⁸ Hereafter referred to as *POTH*.

the art world.⁴⁴⁹ The framework of ‘the art world’ is in fact a useful method in examining *POTH*, in the ways in which texts are presented both as linguistic and visual objects, and the innovative interplay of text to the physical construction of the magazine. Liz Kotz, speaking about visual art movements in the 1960s such as Fluxus and pop-art, writes that

Language is increasingly understood [by artists] not just as a material but as a kind of ‘site’. The page is a visual, physical container [...] [a] white rectangle analogous to the white cube of the gallery – and also a place for action and a publication context.⁴⁵⁰

Finlay was in fact in touch with Fluxus artists in the 1960s, including Dick Higgins, whose Something Else Press published Finlay’s *A Sailor’s Calendar* (1971).⁴⁵¹ The Fluxus artists’ exploration of texts as objects, and vice versa, and their engagement with toys and games in their work, was a likely influence on Finlay’s own work in the 1960s.

During the period of operating *POTH*, Finlay discussed with friends the analogy of games to art (this shall be discussed in more detail shortly). Drawing ‘toys’ and ‘games’ together into the larger concept of ‘play’, I suggest in this chapter that the relationship that Finlay drew between poetry and playful activity illuminates aspects of *POTH*’s editorial practises. Although toys and games are in many ways distinct from one another – games necessarily involve rules to operate, whereas toys do not, etc. – I will group them together under the larger concept of ‘play’ for the purposes of this chapter. My definition of ‘play’ comes from David Stern’s use of the term in his discussion of Ludwig Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*: ‘A practical activity which may involve rules but is not wholly determined by them.’⁴⁵² The idea of play as an open-ended activity can be seen at work in *POTH*, in its publishing of different kinds of poetry (from sound poetry to the lyric) and in the variety of its physical presentation and format (in particular, experimentation in typography and uses of illustration and

⁴⁴⁹ Edwin Morgan, ‘Poor.Old.Tired.Horse’, in *Wood Notes Wild*, ed. by Alec Finlay (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1995) pp. 26-27 (p.27).

⁴⁵⁰ Liz Kotz, *Words to be Looked At: Language in 1960s Art* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007), p. 138.

⁴⁵¹ A. Finlay, Notes to ‘Introduction’, p. 273.

⁴⁵² David G. Stern, *Wittgenstein’s Philosophical Investigations: an introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 89.

graphic design alongside and in interaction with the text). Finlay once described the aspirations of *POTH* as ‘panache, humour, beauty, tradition and experiment’.⁴⁵³ The idea of poetry as playful activity can be envisioned as motivating some or all of these aims, both in the inclusion of specific kinds of poetry – such as concrete poetry and works by poets affiliated with the avant-garde – and through the visual presentation of the little magazine itself. I would like to begin my exploration of *POTH*’s editorial policy of play by drawing a comparison between *POTH*’s presentation of poetries and Wittgenstein’s idea of language games.

Language as games in *POTH*

Finlay discussed the idea of games in relation to art in a letter to Maurice Lindsay on 23 April 1964:

The TLS this week again raises the idea of art as ‘a game’ [...] For a game is a closed-system. Now, in a world without a world-picture, like ours, (without an implicit, ‘invisible’ ‘reality’ to refer to), the idea of a game, as self-sufficient, has obvious uses.⁴⁵⁴

Finlay’s speaking of a game as a ‘closed system’ that is ‘self-sufficient’ echoes his statement about the ‘un-connected’ and ‘pure’ nature of toys. For Finlay, the practical utility of the game (and art) comes to play in a world which has no world-picture. Michael Korr, speaking to Wittgenstein’s use of ‘world-picture’, defines it as a ‘label for all the kinds of knowledge a community may share’.⁴⁵⁵ Using Korr’s definition, we may speculate that Finlay, in positing that in the current situation we possess no such community-shared intuitions about the environment, art imagined as a game are moral *activities* which may help us in considering our relationship to the world. Tom Lubbock gives an insightful

⁴⁵³ Ian Hamilton Finlay, quoted in Alec Finlay, ‘Introduction: Picking the Last Wildflower’, in *Ian Hamilton Finlay: Selections*, ed. by Alec Finlay (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), pp. 1-61 (p. 20).

⁴⁵⁴ Ian Hamilton Finlay, letter to Maurice Lindsay, reprinted in *Model of Order*, pp. 26-27.

⁴⁵⁵ Michael Korr, ‘Certainties of world picture: the epistemological investigations of *On Certainty*’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein*, ed. by Hans Sluga and David G. Stern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 411-441 (p. 412).

commentary on this point: 'Finlay's world-view gives a particular place to art: it has a central place in the world as the bearer of meanings and ideals. He envisages a public, a religious function for art, and thus a world in which it would perform this function. So what the artist does is, in a sense, a form of 'direct action'.⁴⁵⁶ 'Use', 'function', and 'direct action': these terms bring us again to Plato, and the delineation he makes between 'the art of using' and the 'art of imitating' in Book 10 of *Republic*. Unlike the poet, who can only imitate objects in order to please 'the taste of the ignorant multitude', the man who uses the object possesses knowledge and a 'grasp of reality' by having handled and assessed the virtue of the object.⁴⁵⁷ Finlay therefore aligns desirable poetics to a crafting, wherein an object is made and used, rather than merely imitated.

Our brief discussion thus far on art and games leads us to Wittgenstein's ideas about language games. My comparison between Wittgenstein's ideas and Finlay's concern about the relationship between art and play is not motivated by any explicit connections Finlay himself makes between his works and Wittgenstein's writings.⁴⁵⁸ Nor are my conjectures based on concrete evidence of the influence of Wittgenstein's ideas about language games on poetics of the period (although it is likely, as the formulations set up in *Philosophical Investigations* (1953)⁴⁵⁹ had tremendous impact on not just philosophy but in the humanities generally with its contribution to the 'linguistic turn'). My referencing Wittgenstein is upon speculative grounds: Wittgenstein's exposition of language games in *PI*, embedded within a general critique of the way he believed philosophy was being conducted, offers an interesting analogy to Finlay's thinking-through about revolutionary approaches to poetry.⁴⁶⁰ Finlay's

⁴⁵⁶ Tom Lubbock, 'Ian Hamilton Finlay' in *Wood Notes Wild*, ed. by Alec Finlay (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1995), pp. 234-245 (p. 243).

⁴⁵⁷ R.C. Cross and A.D. Woozley, *Plato's Republic* (Houndsmills: Macmillan, 1964), p. 275.

⁴⁵⁸ Finlay's commentators such as Thomas A. Clark, Edwin Morgan, and Marjorie Perloff have noted 'Wittgensteinian' concerns in Finlay's later work, especially in an aphorism in *Table-Talk of Ian Hamilton Finlay* (1985): 'That of which we cannot speak, we must construct.', which is a likely echo of the last sentence of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, 'Of which we cannot speak, thereof we must be silent.' Perloff further sees an explicit connection between Finlay's *The Brown and Brown Poems*, a concrete poem published in 1968 by Jargon press, and Wittgenstein's *Blue and Brown Books*, published as the 'Preliminary Studies for the 'Philosophical Investigations' (1958). Marjorie Perloff, 'From "Suprematism" to Language Game: *The Blue and Brown Poems* of Ian Hamilton Finlay', in *The Present Order: Writings on the Work of Ian Hamilton Finlay* (Marfa: Marfa Book Company, 2010), pp. 85-103 (p. 94).

⁴⁵⁹ Hereafter referred to as *PI*.

⁴⁶⁰ I do not use 'revolutionary' here to suggest that Finlay's ideas about poetic methodology were a radical break from the past. Rather, I believe that Finlay regarded his ideas as part of an

remark that our contemporary world lacks a world-picture, and his election of games in addressing this lack, echoes Wittgenstein's discussion in *PI* about the importance of language in constructing our understanding of our lived experiences. We can draw a parallel between Finlay's consideration of art as play and Wittgenstein's positing of language as games. David Stern explains that the word Wittgenstein initially used for 'game' in *PI* was the German word '*Spiel*', which he believes in its native context is 'broader in scope and covers free form activities.'⁴⁶¹ 'Play' is therefore perhaps a more accurate translation of *Spiel* in that it makes an important connection between language use and playful activity.

Wittgenstein writes in *PI*: 'The word 'language-game' is used here to emphasize the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or a form of life.'⁴⁶² Or, as Stern points out, Wittgenstein's conception of language is not 'just the uttering of words and the movement of limbs', but includes 'much of what we might ordinarily consider [as] surroundings: broader patterns of action, the equipment used [...] and even the sites where the activities take place.'⁴⁶³ This last point about language use contingent on the 'sites where the activities take place' is especially pertinent to thinking about the uses of language in a little magazine. Wittgenstein's powerful suggestion that language plays a crucial role in creating 'world-pictures' can illuminate some aspects of *POTH*'s editorial policies. I would like to draw out two particular aspects of Wittgenstein's discussion about language games which I believe are at work in the editing of *POTH*: diversity and rules.

Diversity of 'Word Methodology' in POTH

In *PI*, Wittgenstein calls attention to the plurality of language games through a series of questions such as these:

arc of a 'full circle' of ideas about poetry in Western thought, going back to ancient Greece. I will suggest later in the chapter that this is the reason why particular writers from the past, such as those affiliated with the avant-garde movements of the first half of the 20th century, are evoked in *POTH*.

⁴⁶¹ Stern, p. 89.

⁴⁶² Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. by G.E.M. Anscombe, P.M.S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte (Chichester: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), p. 15.

⁴⁶³ Stern, p. 89.

But how many kinds of sentences are there? Say assertion, question and command? – There are *countless* kinds; countless different kinds of use of all the things we call ‘signs’, ‘words’, ‘sentences’. And this diversity is not something fixed, given once for all; but new types of language, new language-games, as we may say, come into existence, and others become obsolete and get forgotten. (We can get a *rough picture* of this from the changes in mathematics.)⁴⁶⁴

POTH is in many ways a celebration of this recognition of language as diverse activity: the magazine is an attempt to display samples of the multiple uses of language in poetry. Wittgenstein here points out how the same sentence indicates a different meaning according to the context of its use; he compares the appearance of new uses of language to the ‘changes in mathematics’ in order to demonstrate the radical metamorphosis of language contingent on these contexts. Similarly, the analogies that Finlay draws between toys and poetry, and between games and art, inform *POTH*’s editorial strategy of publishing works which interpret the ‘idea’ of poetry in dramatically disparate ways.

One ‘idea’ of poetry concerns the methodology of words; that is, the poem’s fundamental approach to the basic building block of written language, the word. In the orthodox method of using words in writing, the letters of the alphabet are strung together in a grammatically correct way to infer a ‘meaning’, such as a feeling or narrative. Words here are used to express a specific image or idea, relying on the pre-existing framework or precedent already established within communities (i.e. grammatical rules). Many poems in *POTH* follow this ‘syntactical idea’ of poetry. Other poems do not, for example Pete Brown’s piece ‘The blue moor’ which appears in the first issue, here in its entirety:

Trenglooor muryrrr dyuumm
remglmmm myoor digrrym
gmumyooorrrmmmmmm gfumm
zahum jahum drrumm

⁴⁶⁴ Wittgenstein, pp. 14-15.

Yehooooomm!⁴⁶⁵

Rather than communicate an explicit and clear idea, words here are seemingly used as a script for sound-making. Because the words' arrangement within the poem, let alone the arrangement of the letters within the individual words, are more ungrammatical –at least in contemporary English –than grammatical, the reader must revert to an alternative system of grappling with what is presented. The grammatically conventional title, 'The blue moor', gives one direction for interpretation. In the first instance, the epistemological gap between grammar (the title) and un-grammar (the text) gives the reader some pause in considering the relationship between a 'heading' and the 'body' of this poem. Are the words a script for the sound-world of the blue moor? What is the significance of the exclamatory ending? Is the poem a sly commentary on our insistent desire to draw relationships between the poem and 'sense', to its 'meaning'? Or is the word, and hence the poem, here understood as a physical activity or sensation, as our lips, tongue, and throat muscles formulate the sounds prompted by the letters?

Another method of encountering the word in *POTH* is through its particular visual representation on the page. In the sixth issue, three poems by three poets appear under the heading 'Concrete Poems from Brazil'. One of these pieces [fig. 1] is by Augusto de Campos.

p
p l
p l u
p l u v
p l u v i
p l u v i a
f l u v i a l
f l u v i a l
f l u v i a l
f l u v i a l
f l u v i a l
f l u v i a l

[fig. 1]

⁴⁶⁵ Pete Brown, 'The blue moor', *POTH 1*, p. 1.

It is clear that this poem displays a significantly different approach to words from the conventional use. Presented as a diagonal ‘block’ of words, we can detect two sensible words: fluvial (read left to right) and pluvial (read up to down). We can see the words meshing into one another, and if we sustain the ‘direction’ of the eye-movement (left/right or up/down), we can see one word making a trajectory in becoming the other – but it does not quite succeed in doing so. One way to interpret this piece is to comprehend it as a visualization of the dynamic between rain (pluvial) and rivers (fluvial). The shape of the poem itself can also be contemplated: is it a section of the river? The downpour of rain? The particular language game presented by this poem, at least as I have interpreted it, invites us to consider the visual properties of the word alongside its semantic properties.

Rules in POTH

The second aspect of Wittgenstein’s discussion of language-games which I wish to compare with *POTH* is the role of rules. Wittgenstein’s consideration of rules in relation to language in *PI* and elsewhere is lengthy and complex, and I only intend here to raise some aspects of his discussion to highlight the innovation of *POTH*’s editorial practices. Wittgenstein writes in *PI*:

Must I *know* whether I understand a word? Don’t I also sometimes *think* I understand a word (as I may think I understand a method of calculation) and then realize that I did not understand it? (‘I thought I knew what ‘relative’ and ‘absolute’ motion meant, but I see that I don’t know.’)⁴⁶⁶

One interpretation of this passage is thus: even if we think we grasp the way in which words operate in one context, there exists no way to absolutely confirm this grasping. For Wittgenstein, every repeated use of the word only confirms the uncertainty of his grasp of the word; that is, when he attempts to extend the use of the language, or in other words, follow the ‘rule’ of the word, he finds that the rule is not so sound, or allows for some exceptions to take place. This uncertainty about the concept of rules in language, which occupies Wittgenstein for a significant portion of his philosophical oeuvre, points to his underlining doubt concerning the effectiveness of language as a vehicle to convey any feeling or

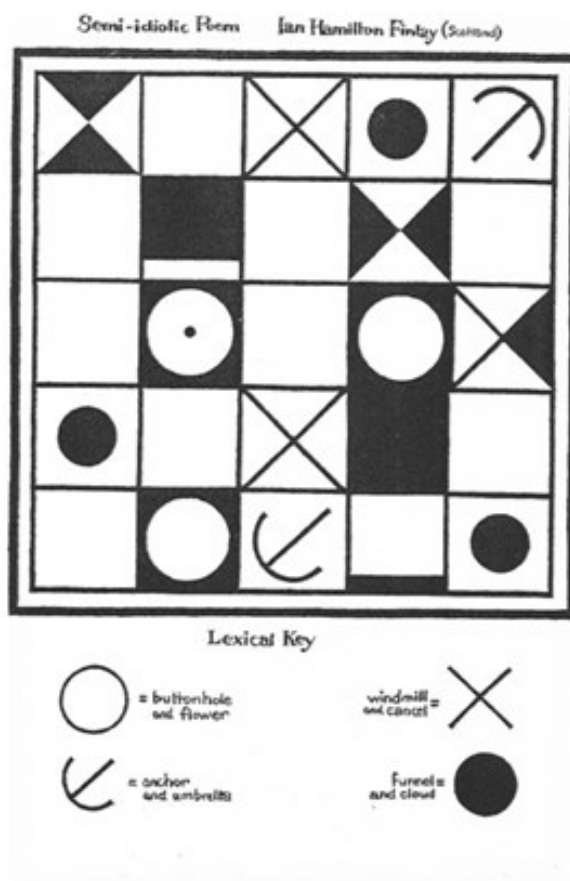
⁴⁶⁶ Wittgenstein, p. 59.

idea accurately. Yet Wittgenstein himself uses language to evoke the problem of language: he does not discount his own role in the paradoxical dilemma. For Wittgenstein commentator Marie McGinn, the questions and doubts over rules expressed in *PI* were ‘intended to counter a philosophical tendency to misrepresent, or oversimplify, or take for granted some aspect of the way our language functions.’⁴⁶⁷ The analogy Wittgenstein draws between language and games shows us that word usage is a complex system involving both rules, which sustains the very concept of ‘language’, and activity – the actual speaking or writing of that language. He writes in *On Certainty*: ‘Our rules leave loopholes open, and the practice has to speak for itself.’⁴⁶⁸

A similar scepticism towards uncritical attitudes to language is narrated through *POTH*’s twenty-five issue run. A language rule may be suggested in an issue, only to be abandoned for a different set of rules, or rule, in another issue. At the same time, the magazine is a celebration of language rules: it shows how different poems and different issues of the magazine use rules to imaginative effect. Issue 12, for example, consists entirely of concrete poetry published alongside optical designs by Jeffrey Steele, demonstrating the particular rule which the poems could be said to be following: the calling to attention the interplay of a word’s visuality and its signifying function both in the poems themselves and between the poems and the optical designs. In Issue 23 (also called ‘Teapoth 23’), the rule seems not to lie in the poems’ shared ‘word methodology’, but the poems’ adherence to the theme of teapots. The 25th and final issue of the magazine collects together ‘one word poems’, a genre which is arguably Finlay’s creation. Seen as a whole, *POTH* maintains an ironic attitude to the idea of fixed uses of language, and even to the concept of a poetry magazine. Poems are analogous to games in *POTH* in that individual issues can be understood to be following a rule. However, as the rules of rummy do not apply to the game of hopscotch, a rule followed by a concrete poem may not necessarily work in viewing a lyric poem.

⁴⁶⁷ Marie McGinn, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Wittgenstein and the Philosophical Investigations* (London, Routledge, 1997), p. 83.




⁴⁶⁸ Wittgenstein, quoted in Korr, p. 139.



[fig. 2]

So far we have considered how *POTH* uses the ‘rule’ of thematic issues to highlight the evanescence of language use. In this scenario, one group of poems are contrasted with another group to demonstrate how our understanding of language is often dependent on contexts. Yet rules between different issues of *POTH* are not mutually exclusive. For example, several poems in the ‘Teapoth’ issue just discussed are concrete poems. We may look at how an individual poem in *POTH*, Finlay’s ‘Semi-idiotic Poem’⁴⁶⁹ [fig. 2] in Issue 13, can be seen as a critique of indiscriminating use of language. A statement which Finlay made to Turnbull in a letter (on 13th August 1975) may here illuminate an aspect of what this poem does: ‘[In a game] the basic moves are very simple, but can result in a kind of measured complexity which one can *see*.’ I’d like to suggest here that this poem follows the Wittgensteinian procedure of demonstrating the

⁴⁶⁹ The semiotic poem was developed by Noigandres poets Décio Pignatari and Luiz Angelo Pinto in 1964. In a published defence, they wrote that the aim of this kind of poem was ‘the creation of designed and constructed languages according to each situation or necessity.’ Décio Pignatari and Luiz Angelo Pinto, quoted in Mary Ellen Solt, *Concrete Poetry: A World View* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968), p. 15.

problematic relationship between language and ‘meaning’: it uses the form of the poem to complicate our idea of what a poem ‘does’. ‘Semi-idiotic poem’ through its parodic title literally imagines semiotics as a game. The objective of the game, however, is difficult to grasp, though its shape may be easy enough to see. A grid, five squares tall and five squares wide, contains what appear to be symbols, though some of the squares are left empty, or fully or partially filled with black. Are the squares presented as a scene for a boardgame, like chess, or is the grid a space which has partially been filled in by symbols, as in a half-finished crossword puzzle? A ‘key’ gives explanations of the pictographic vocabulary, offering one way in: the corresponding pictures on the grid can be understood as signifying the offered meanings, however cryptic they may be. But this still does not give us any solid answers to what the objectives of the game are. The poem sustains a tension between symbol and meaning; it may be offering a critique of the idea that language gives knowledge and increases understanding. For even when we are given the key [ = anchor and umbrella], the question of *what to do* with this information remains. The meaning of the symbols, and the game itself, actually rests on our decision of what we’re going to use the symbol  for. The rule of [ = anchor and umbrella] is a kind of truism which has no function outside of its definition. This poem can therefore be understood as a visual representation of the complexity of language whose existence relies equally on rules and use.

The Approach to Form: Concrete and Lyrical Poetry

My exploration of *POTH*’s ‘playfulness’ has thus far concentrated on the overall trajectory of its editorial strategies vis-à-vis ‘conventional’ approaches to language and poetry. In this section, I will explore specific examples of formal experimentation within the content of *POTH*, looking at the publication of concrete poetry and lyric poetry within its pages. Significantly, both concrete and lyric poetry are contextualized not as ‘new’ or ‘old’ forms respectively, but as sharing the same methodological commitment to order and beauty, which in *POTH* is demonstrated as a timeless pursuit. What unites concrete and lyric poetry in *POTH*, I will suggest, is their conceit as artful rather than truthful forms.

The deliberate removal of the form from the realm of ‘reality’ allows the reader to engage with the poem in the spirit of play and experiment.

Finlay’s desire to publish diverse methods of language and uses of poetic form was perhaps motivated by a personal dissatisfaction with a particular ‘kind’ of language game he identified as ‘anguish poems’, which he believed proliferated in poetry magazines in the early 1960s. In a letter written to Turnbull in 1964, Finlay explained why he disliked the ‘anguish poems’ in Cid Corman’s little magazine *Origin* (in which his works had also appeared):

I think what I find hard to manage now [in *Origin*], is the self-conscious selflessness which somehow produces an effect of a whole barrier of selves, to be got through, or ignored... I believe in most of the things they say, but somehow I have heard them so often, that they come to smack of cliché and something that is, in the end, quite the opposite of self-less dedication etc. It seems to be that *POTH* (wicked as it may be) has less self in it, and manages to have a centre or purpose, without quite so much fuss.

Writing to Stephen Scobie in 1967, he wrote, ‘I don’t think I’m against what is at present termed ‘confessional’ poetry because of its ‘unique’ or ‘individual’ aspects –indeed, I wonder if it is all that original and not in fact rather hackneyed?’⁴⁷⁰ Finlay parodied what he called an ‘*Origin*-type poem’ in the closing of a letter to Turnbull on 8 March 1964:

With love from Sue

→ To you
 And from
 Wee
 Me
 Too ←

⁴⁷⁰ Ian Hamilton Finlay, letter to Stephen Scobie, quoted in Stephen Scobie, ‘The side-Road to Dunsyre’, *Akros* 15, Vol. 5 (1970), 51-61 (p. 55).

And on the next page of the letter, he provided what he called a ‘*POTH*-type poem’:



If Finlay was tongue-in-cheek about the clichéd modishness of the poems ‘anguish’, their relationship to ethics was an objection which perhaps troubled him more profoundly. He wrote to Dom Sylvester Houédard: ‘The new poetry will be a poetry without the word ‘I’. It will be silent, & will be a sign of peace and sanity. I think the poets should bear the anguish of not writing anguish poems.’⁴⁷¹ It seems crucial for Finlay, at least during this period, that poetry, both in its writing and reading, encourages psychological health. He wrote to Michael Shayer in 1960: ‘It would be quite wrong to write out of hysteria – Unless you were identified with it, then the result would be morally bad art, and would only extend the hysteria.’⁴⁷² The methodology of constantly drawing attention to the idea of the (sick) self is indeed quite far from Finlay’s idea of the toy as being ‘things of no account in themselves, yet true to inspiration.’⁴⁷³ Here, we may think about T.S. Eliot’s discussion of impersonality in art: ‘No artist produces great art by a deliberate attempt to express his personality. He expresses his personality indirectly through concentrating upon a task which is a task in the same sense as the making of an efficient engine or the turning of a jug or a table leg.’⁴⁷⁴ The links which Finlay and Eliot make between craft and the individual draws out the idea of poetry as having a *use* to the reader of the poem rather than merely being an imprint of the writer’s personality, let alone an imprint of solipsism and even, mania.

⁴⁷¹ Ian Hamilton Finlay, letter to Dom Sylvester Houédard, quoted in Dom Sylvester Houédard, in ‘Concrete Poetry & Ian Hamilton Finlay’ *Typographica* 8 (December 1963), 47-62 (p. 60).

⁴⁷² Ian Hamilton Finlay, letter to Michael Shayer, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Gael Turnbull Collection, Acc. 12553

⁴⁷³ Finlay, letter to David Brown, quoted in Abrioux, p. 10.

⁴⁷⁴ T.S. Eliot, *Selected Essays 1917-1932* (London: Faber, 1934), p. 114.

Set in space: Concrete poetry

Concrete poetry, or at least a particular articulation of concrete poetry, was one answer to the problem of poetry for Finlay in the early 1960s.⁴⁷⁵ According to Alec Finlay, it is likely that Finlay was introduced to concrete poetry by a letter written by Portuguese poet E.M. de Melo e Castro on Brazilian concrete poetry, published in the *Times Literary Supplement* on 25th May 1962.⁴⁷⁶ In the same year Brazilian poet Augusto de Campos sent Finlay the 'Pilot Plan for Concrete Poetry' (1958) issued by the Noigandres poets, a collective of concrete poets co-founded by de Campos in 1952. This document, originally published in the fourth issue of the magazine *Noigandres*, synthesized many of the ideas expressed by the Noigandres poets between 1950 and 1958. It traces the genealogy of aural and visual experiments through the poetry of Stephen Mallarmé, James Joyce, e.e. cummings, Dadaists, Futurists, among others. In this way, concrete poetry is demonstrated not as a radical paradigm shift, but rather a moment within the trajectory of an evolutionary process in experimental poetry. These missives from abroad about the 'new' poetry elicited this response from Finlay:

With the very strange experience in the way I was putting words together in my early poems – which at the time was considered very unconventional – this way of putting together words suddenly ceased to have any kind of validity for me. And I found this very disconcerting. At first I could not understand it at all, I really could not understand what was happening. I used to say to other Scottish poets, 'There's a crisis of syntax' [...] I was very, very sceptical [with concrete poetry] to begin with, because I did not like avant-garde art. But when I actually saw it, I

⁴⁷⁵ Mary Ellen Solt writes in *Concrete Poetry: A World View* (1968): 'There are now so many kinds of experimental poetry being labeled "concrete" that it is difficult to say what the word means[...] Often concrete poems can only be classified in terms of their predominating characteristics.'

Mary Ellen Solt, *Concrete Poetry: A World View* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968), p. 1.

⁴⁷⁶ Alec Finlay, 'Introduction: Picking the Last Wildflower' in *Ian Hamilton Finlay: Selections*, ed. by Alec Finlay (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), p. 272.

was delighted, and I realised it was just what in my little naïve, home-made, Scottish way, I had been thinking about...'⁴⁷⁷

The Noigandres's pilot plan outlines specific characteristics of the concrete poem, the most fundamental being the reduction of language, and the deliberate relationships established between the words and the space of the page, as well as between the words and time (linearity). Finlay wrote to Edwin Morgan during this period that he was also keenly interested in concrete poetry's potential in drawing the relation between the written word and sound.⁴⁷⁸ Furthermore, the Noigandres's vision of concrete poetry, significantly for Finlay vis-à-vis his objections with 'anguish poems', is resolute in articulating the ethical dimension of poetry:

Concrete poem is an object in and by itself, not an interpreter of exterior objects and/ or more or less subjective feelings. [...] Concrete Poetry: total responsibility before language. Thorough realism. Against a poetry of expression, subjective and hedonistic. To create precise problems and to solve them in terms of sensible language. A general art of the word. The poem-product: useful object.⁴⁷⁹

The Noigandres poets here emphasize the objectivity of the concrete poem. Constituting the poem as product and useful object (as Finlay does), they contrast the concrete poem to 'poetry of expression' which presumably presents emotional problems to the reader without offering any solutions. This formulation of the ideal poetry having 'uses' to society echoes Finlay's ideas concerning the 'new' poetry, which we have seen earlier as developed via his construction of actual objects such as the toy. As Anne Moeglin-Delacroix notes, recalling Finlay's comment about toys leading to 'purity' and away from 'syntax': 'The concrete poem is [...] an object of language in that it eliminates discursivity, relations between words, and 'syntax' [...] [It is] a play with letters

⁴⁷⁷ Ian Hamilton Finlay, quoted in Alec Finlay, 'Afterward: The Dewy Glen', in *The Dancers Inherit the Party and Glasgow Beasts* by Ian Hamilton Finlay (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1996), pp. 95-114 (p. 98).

⁴⁷⁸ A. Finlay, 'Introduction', p. 29.

⁴⁷⁹ Augusto de Campos, Decio Pignatari, and Haroldo de Campos, 'Pilot Plan for Concrete Poetry', reprinted in Solt, pp.70-72 (p. 72).

whose content is determined by the mechanism of its construction, and whose closure upon itself guarantees its “purity.”⁴⁸⁰

In a letter to Pierre Garnier in 1963, Finlay wrote: ‘Concrete’ by its very limitations offers a tangible image of goodness and sanity; it is very far from the now-fashionable poetry of anguish and self [...] It is a model, of order, even if set in a space full of doubt. (Whereas non-concrete might be said to be set in society, rather than space, and its ‘satire’, its ‘revolt’, are only disguised symptoms of social dishonesty).’⁴⁸¹ Finlay’s conceptualisation of a poem as a model set in ‘space’ rather than society was very likely an idea he had formulated before his first encounter with concrete poetry. On 8 December, 1961, he wrote to Creeley: ‘I would say that what is remarkable in your poems is their artificiality, that is, the way they exist surrounded by a clear space, a pure style in a pure space. That is, they are beautiful. And there is this great fineness in their actual substance.’⁴⁸² These comments suggest that Finlay had already been thinking about poetry in terms of their ‘closed-ness’ from society, and that it is this conscious separation which creates potential for communicating beauty. To put it another way, Finlay here may be suggesting that once poetry is acknowledged as an artful construction (i.e. set in space) rather than as a mirror held up to society, possibilities are created for poetry to be useful to the reader. This again echoes the Socratic idea of art as mimesis, and the educational dimension of art in imparting citizens with concepts of beauty. Finlay praises Creeley’s poetry as being fine in their ‘actual substance’, evoking the poem as an object finely crafted by its maker, as a sculpture, or toy, may be. Writing to Edwin Morgan in July 1963, he wrote: ‘I wonder if Augusto [de Campos]’s idea that the content of the poem is its own structure could not be reworded to mean that the poem is not about beauty of this or that but simply, beauty –the content is a fineness of relations, which IS meaning...’⁴⁸³

The usefulness of the poem in society was an idea which preoccupied another poet who is identified as an early practitioner of concrete poetry, Eugen

⁴⁸⁰ Anne Moeglin-Delacoix, ‘Poet or Artist?’ in *The Present Order: Writings on the Work of Ian Hamilton Finlay* (Marfa: Marfa Book Company, 2010), pp. 31-69 (p. 34).

⁴⁸¹ Ian Hamilton Finlay, letter to Pierre Garnier (17 September 1963), reprinted in *Model of Order*, pp. 22-23.

⁴⁸² Ian Hamilton Finlay, letter to Robert Creeley, Stanford, Stanford University Libraries, MS Robert Creeley Papers, series 1

⁴⁸³ Finlay, letter to Morgan, quoted in A. Finlay, ‘Introduction’, p. 29.

Gomringer.⁴⁸⁴ It is very likely that Finlay read Gomringer's early essays on concrete poetry (Gomringer called his own concrete poems 'constellations') soon after his introduction to concrete poetry by the Brazilian poets in the spring of 1962, and it is also likely that Gomringer's thinking-through about the 'new' poetry in terms of play-activity profoundly influenced Finlay's own art, perhaps further developing the analogy he had established between toys and poetry. In 'From Line to Constellation' (1954), Gomringer identifies the 'new poem' as 'an object to be both seen and used: an object containing thought but made concrete through play-activity (*denkgegenstanddenkspiel*) [...] Its objective element of play is useful to modern man, whom the poet helps through his special gift for this kind of play-activity.'⁴⁸⁵ Significantly, concrete poetry is figured as a participatory *activity* for the reader:

The constellation is an arrangement, and at the same time a play-area of fixed dimensions. The constellation is ordered by the poet. He determines the play-area, the field of force and suggests its possibilities. The reader, the new reader, grasps the idea of play, and joins in. In the constellation something is brought into the world. It is a reality in itself and not a poem about something or other. The constellation is an invitation.⁴⁸⁶

Finlay's initiation to concrete poetry was directly reflected in his creative output. In 1963 he published his first collection of concrete poems, *Rapel*. In March of the same year, the sixth issue of *POTH*, mentioned previously, contained 'Concrete Poems from Brazil', by three members of the Noigandres group: Marcelo Moura, Pedro Xisto, and August de Campos. Wild Hawthorn Press also published in 1963 *Fish-Sheet One*, a pamphlet of British concrete poetry including work by Finlay, Edwin Morgan, J. F. Hendry, Anselm Hollo,

⁴⁸⁴ Gomringer is often considered the 'father' of concrete poetry, having published his first concrete poems in 1953 inspired by an interest in the Symbolist poetry of Mallarmé and the work of the Concrete Artists in the 1940s. As Solt points out, however, Gomringer's work, as well as his famous 'manifesto' on the new poetry, 'From Line to Constellation' [1954], was only one articulation of a sensibility which was concurrently being practised by many poets. (Solt, p. 8.) In 1955 Gomringer met Décio Pignatari, one of the co-founders of the Noigandres group; in 1956 it was mutually decided by Gomringer and the Noigandres poets that the anthology they produced together would carry the title 'Concrete Poetry', thus 'officially' launching a global poetry movement.

⁴⁸⁵ Eugen Gomringer, 'From Line to Constellation', reprinted in Solt, p. 67.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

Pete Brown, and Spike Hawkins. The tenth issue of *POTH*, also called the ‘concrete number’, contained poetry by Augusto de Campos, Eugen Gomringer, Dom Sylvester Houédard, Edwin Morgan, Finlay, Robert Lax, Anselm Hollo, and Robert Frame, reflecting the variety as well as the internationalism – contributors are British, Swiss, Finnish, American, and Brazilian – of the concrete poetry movement. Although concrete poetry featured regularly in *POTH* from issue six onwards, it did not publish it exclusively, despite a common perception that it was a ‘concrete broadsheet’. Edwin Morgan suggests that Finlay ‘used [concrete poetry], contributed to it, and moved on’, and that concrete was useful for him in that it suggested ideas concerning ‘syntax, structure, metaphor, and metamorphosis’.⁴⁸⁷ The ‘concrete poets’ included in *POTH* are from a small circle and do not attempt to cover the breadth of the concrete poetry experiment which blossomed in the 1960s; apart from the Noigandres poets, the concrete works are predominantly by British and American poets, most of whom kept personal correspondences with Finlay.

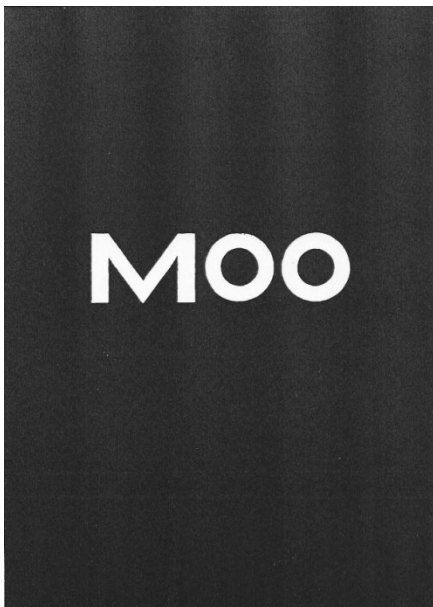
To demonstrate this sense of ‘concrete play’, I would like to examine the concrete poem ‘io and the ox-eye daisy’, written by Ronald Johnson and designed by John Furnival, which appears as the nineteenth issue of *POTH* [fig. 3.1-fig.3.10].⁴⁸⁸ On each of the eleven pages of the issue are images constructed by letters, either on an entirely dark navy-blue or white background. The ‘io’ of the title offers a clue to a possible reading of the poem. In Greek mythology Io was the daughter of the river god Inachus, and a priestess at the sanctuary of Hera. Zeus, after having had an affair with Io, transformed her into a white cow in an effort to hide his infidelity from Hera.⁴⁸⁹ Hera claimed ownership of the cow (the cow, along with the peacock, was her sacred animal), and having suspected that it was one of Zeus’s sexual conquests in disguise, commanded her servant, the giant Argus Panoptes, to guard over it. Zeus sent Hermes to recover Io, which was no easy task, as Argus Panoptes possessed multiple eyes for

⁴⁸⁷ Edwin Morgan, ‘Early Finlay’, *Wood Notes Wild*, pp. 16-24 (p. 21).

⁴⁸⁸ Interestingly, Finlay had suggested to Johnson that the *POTH* issue should be ‘marketed’ for children. He wrote to Johnson: ‘Drop the whole idea of it being a children's number, since you don't like it. I think I thought it would make it easier for people to enjoy the poem if it was presented that way. Like they usually feel ‘free’ to enjoy my toys, but not my poems [...]’ Finlay, letter to Ronald Johnson. Lawrence: University of Kansas Kenneth Spencer Research Library MS Ronald Johnson Papers 1954-1993, Folder 1

⁴⁸⁹ This interpretation of the Greek myth is taken from Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1955).

vigilance. Hermes however managed to lull all of Argus Panoptes's eyes to sleep with music, and released Io after slaying the giant. Hera, having discovered the deed, placed the eyes of Argus Panoptes in the feathers of the peacock and sent a gadfly to torment Io wherever she roamed. After having wandered much of Southern Europe and Western Asia, Io settled in Egypt, where, after being transformed back into human form by Zeus, she bore him his child, Epaphus. The myth of Io's transformation and wandering has been the source of various epithets such as the Ionian Sea and the Bosphorous ('ford of the cow') Strait, which Io had passed on her long sojourn. In the Greek city of Argos, Io was the name by which the moon was worshipped as an agricultural fertility goddess by its citizens, because the crescent shape of the new moon resembled the horn of the cow. The new moon was thought to indicate the arrival of the rainy season and the subsequent growth of crops.



[fig. 3.1]



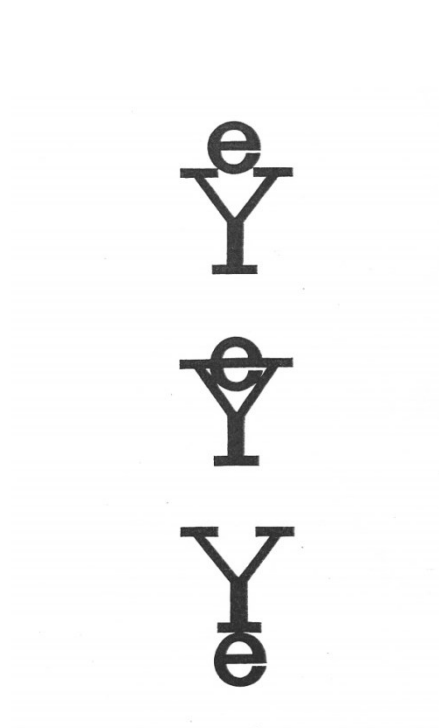
[fig. 3.2]



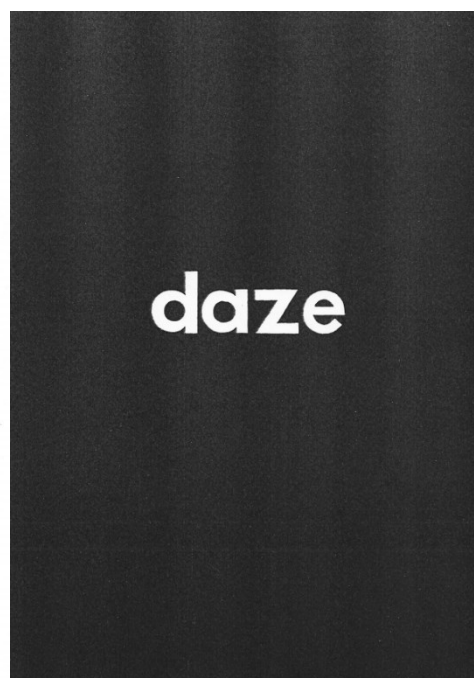
[fig. 3.3]



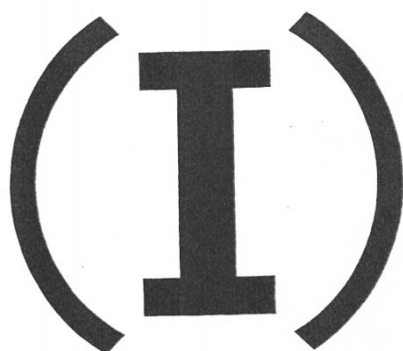
[fig. 3.4]



[fig. 3.5]

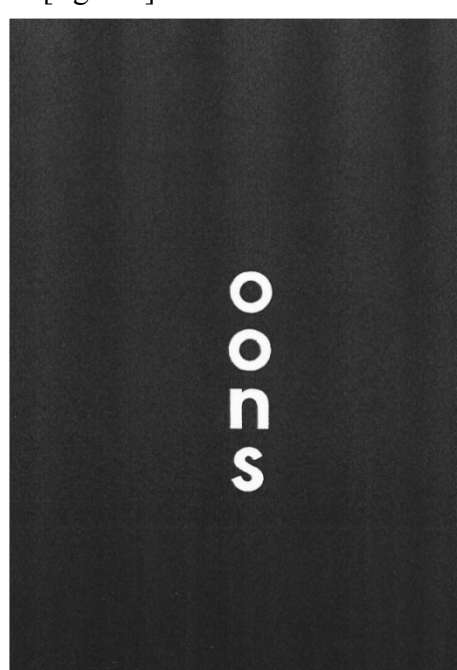
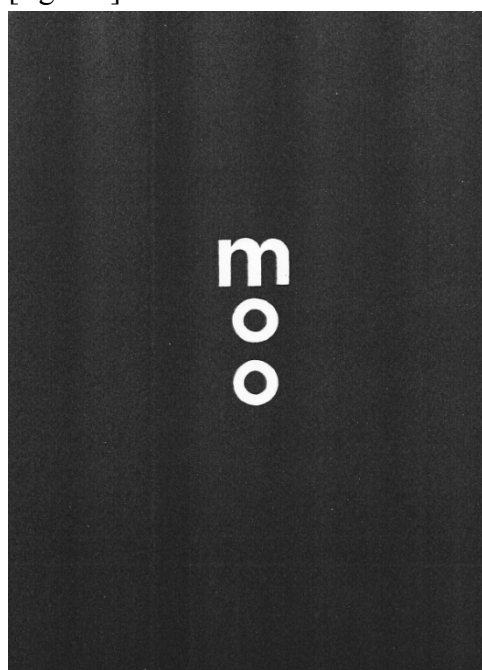


[fig. 3.6]



[fig. 3.7]

[fig. 3.8]



[fig. 3.9]

[fig. 3.10]

The poem can be interpreted as various acts of play on the name 'Io'. Io's transformation into a cow is reflected on the first page [fig. 3.1], where the word 'MOO', as white letters against a dark navy-blue backdrop, has the metonymic function of Io as the white cow crying out in the darkness. On the opposing page

[fig. 3.2], 'MOO' has become 'MOON'. The particular juxtaposition of the third (white) 'O' and 'MOON' visually depicts both the rising of the moon into the night sky and the conversion of Io into the moon-goddess. The next two pages, like the two pages just discussed, can similarly be regarded in conjunction with each other to narrate the metamorphosis of Io. The left page shows 'Io' [fig. 3.3] and on the right [fig. 3.4], 'ox'; when perceived as ideograms, these texts demonstrate the ways in which 'O', or the moon, may be suspended, as in the previous page. The next image, a play between the letters 'e' and 'Y' [fig. 3.5], may be a reference to the multiple-eyed Argus Panoptes. There is a visual succession here as the 'e' can be seen to be roving from top to the bottom of the 'Y', perhaps as an eyeball moves within its socket. 'Eye' phonetically mirrors the pronunciation of 'I' in 'Io', recalling the removal of Argus Panoptes's eyes by Hera after his failed protection of Io. Additionally, the image of 'eY' resembles that of a daisy, recalling both the title of the poem and Io as an agricultural fertility goddess. In the next image [fig. 3.6], the white words 'daze' set against a black background reminds us of the lulling of Argus Panoptes, and his subsequent blindness (and eventual death). 'daze' also aurally suggests the ox-eye daisy (also called the moon-eye daisy). Io reappears (as the letters 'I' and 'o') on the next two pages [figs 3.7 and 3.8]. The bracketing of the letters transforms each letter into pictures of eyes. On the final two pages [figs 3.9 and 3.10] we see the reappearance of the moon in the darkness. This time the 'o' of 'moo' and 'oons' are asserted as pictorial eyes. The pluralization of the moon on the final page suggests the multiplicity of signification and transformation operating in (concrete) poetry and mythology.

'Io and the ox-eye daisy' thus affords multiple entry points of engagement. We can understand the poem on a visual level as a series of letters on the page creating pictures of moons, daisies, and eyes. On a phonetic level, the words evoke the presence of a cow ('moo') and repeated sounds as 'I' and 'eye' create an aural pattern. On a metaphorical level, the poem offers reflexive commentary on poetry-making and reading as necessarily transformative procedures: 'daze' suggests the reader's engagement and even enchantment within the realm of the poem. If 'Io' of the title evokes the Greek myth, then we duly associate events of the Io myth to the 'actions' we read as taking place in the poem. The reading just attempted amalgamates these various

reading/seeing/listening strategies. The concrete poem, as a play activity, asks of the reader to establish their own rules by which to interact with the letters on the page, within the bounds of the conditions established by the poem, including the premise that the work is unrepresentative of external reality. Although concrete poetry, perhaps more than other forms of poetry, invites playful interaction by its disregard of grammatical, syntactical ‘sense’, Finlay did not believe that it was the only way to achieve his poetic ideals of experiment and beauty in the pages of *POTH*.

Interaction with traditional poetic forms: The Lyric

Finlay wrote to Gael Turnbull in 1964, ‘I feel less about didactic lines of concrete than an underlying line of lyrical, non-sick, singing [...] I hope *POTH* keeps to that, a wee bit...whether concrete or not...’ Here Finlay again explicitly disaffiliates *POTH* from the poetry of anguish, and at the same time draws a relation between lyricism and the desired kinds of poetry. Finlay’s association of poetry to song evokes not only Walter Pater’s famous maxim ‘*All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music*’⁴⁹⁰ (i.e. the idea that the ideal art is a unification of form and content), but also to the ancient Greek poetic form of verse recited to lyre music. Indeed, the Classical tradition of lyric poetry is referenced in the eleventh issue with the publication of excerpts of Horace’s *Odes*, translated by Ronald Johnson.⁴⁹¹ The inclusion of Horace’s lyrics is just one example of *POTH*’s interface with traditional poetic forms and their various interpretations and permutations: excerpts from Apollinaire’s *Bestiary* (translated by Edwin Morgan) also appear in the eleventh issue, recalling the bestiary, a book of animals whose earliest example is the ancient Greek *Physiologus*. In both cases the original form has been altered; the translations by contemporary poets furthermore contribute to the transformative process. Finlay’s editorial

⁴⁹⁰ Walter Pater, ‘The School of Giorgione’, in *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*, ed. by Donald L. Hill (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), pp. 102-122 (p. 106). Italics are Pater’s.

⁴⁹¹ Though it must be noted that the Roman poetic tradition of lyric poetry had already deviated significantly from the Ancient Greek tradition; music was no longer a requirement, though the metrical form was more or less maintained. Horace’s odes, however, are thought to be a conscious imitation of Ancient Greek lyric performance. David West, ‘Introduction’ in *Horace: The Complete Odes and Epodes*, trans. by David West (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. vii – xxxiii (p. xiv – xv).

manoeuvre in *POTH* of publishing contemporary interpretations of older forms underscores the potentiality for freshness and experiment intrinsic in traditional poetic forms. At the same time, the gathering, within one publication, of 'new' poetic forms as concrete poetry with older forms as the lyric, creates a trans-temporal community of writers and readers united by the endeavour of poetry. As Stephen Bann notes about Finlay's later works, 'Classicism presumes, either explicitly or implicitly, that there is a public domain, a cultural treasury, to which both the poet and his public have access. It accepts that the artist must exercise his powers of imagination and invention upon the common charge of human thought and discourse.'⁴⁹² Again, we are reminded of Eliot's theory on tradition and the artist: Bann's analysis highlights an aspect of *POTH* which seeks to frame contemporary poetry within the existing order of 'organic tradition'.⁴⁹³

Lyric poetry is demonstrated in *POTH* as an older poetic form which contains a charge of contemporaneity. The linking of lyric poetry not to 19th century Romanticism but to Classicism (with the inclusion of Horace) reminds us that the form has ancient lineage, and is not necessarily defined by the output of the 19th century Romantic poets which has significantly shaped our idea of the lyric as 'poetry' par excellence.⁴⁹⁴ Lyric in *POTH* is shown to have an intrinsic relationship to the concept of play, and as a site of varied and experimental activity rather than a demonstration of monumentality. One fundamental characteristic of the lyric poem as conveyed in *POTH* is its 'artificial' nature: that is, it is a carefully crafted poem which follows the premise of a relatively brief expression of intense emotion. Finlay noted that his own early poems written in what he called the 'lyric mode' were 'created and not natural thing[s]'.⁴⁹⁵ This statement signals Finlay's admiration of the 'constructedness' of lyric poetry: like the toy, it is a human-made object, and does not make any claims to imitate life. Its value lies therefore not in its faithfulness in capturing the external world of society, but in its artfulness in evoking the internal realm of mind. And as with a game, the unfolding of the lyric poem is ordered by the rules

⁴⁹² Stephen Bann, 'Afterward', in *Honey by the Water* by Ian Hamilton Finlay. Los Angeles: Black Sparrow Press, 1973. pp. 51-57 (p. 55).

⁴⁹³ Yet notably in *POTH*, the poetic tradition is plural, and not limited to forms created in the West, including classical poetry from China and Japan.

⁴⁹⁴ Christopher John Murray, *Encyclopaedia of the Romantic Era, 1760-1850* (New York: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2004), p. 700.

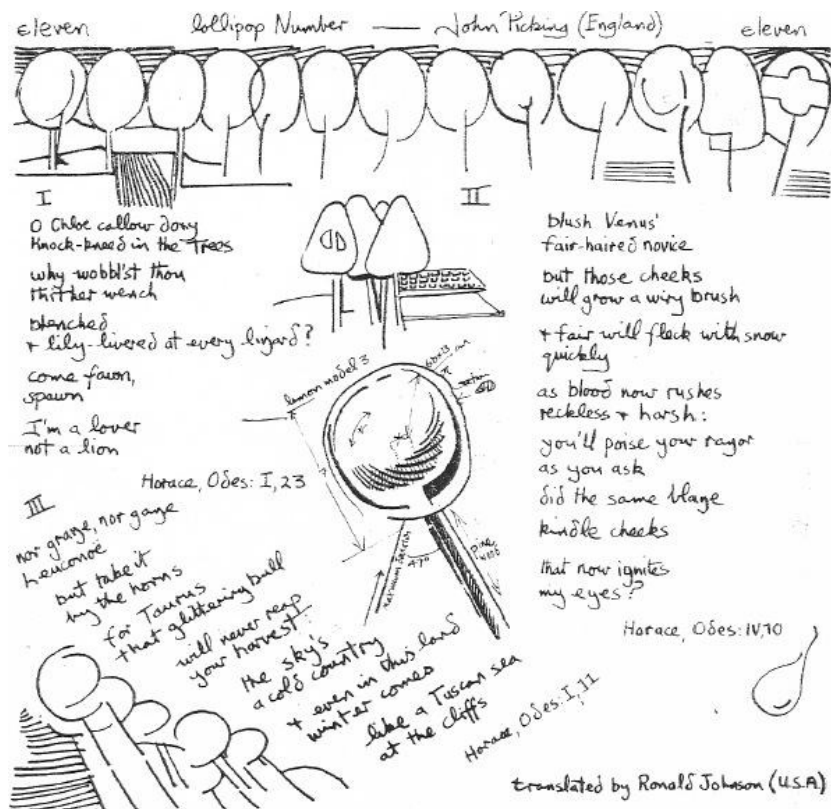
⁴⁹⁵ Ian Hamilton Finlay, quoted in A. Finlay, 'Afterward', p. 108.

set out by its form, which I will forward here as brevity, non-linear syntax, rhythm, and frequently, pathos. In *POTH* these rules are shown not to be constraints, but as terms set out for engagement with the reader, who may or may not recognise the conceit of the play. Eugen Gomringer's earlier enigmatic commentary on concrete poetry may also be applied here: 'The reader, the new reader, grasps the idea of play, and joins in. In the constellation something is brought into the world. It is a reality in itself and not a poem about something or other. The constellation is an invitation.'⁴⁹⁶ Two lyrical poems in *POTH*, Horace's *Odes* and Lorine Niedecker's 'Florida', promote this sense of immediacy and humanity through visual and aural cues.

Ronald Johnson's translations of three odes by Horace appear in issue 11. The presentation of the poem in handwritten cursive, by artist John Picking, gives the work the immediacy of a scribbled note. Furthermore, the illustrations of abstracted trees framing the text imbue the odes with a whimsical charm. These visual cues of contemporaneity and playfulness contrast with the austere evocation of Venus in the opening two lines, reminding us of the poem's origination in Classical Antiquity. Such contrasts in the poem (present v. past, whimsy v. austerity) create a pause in our encounter with the lyric: the ancient form is shown to have possibilities for contemporary engagement and interpretation. *POTH* is rife with moments of 'defamiliarity'⁴⁹⁷ wherein literary forms – including the format of the little magazine – and ideas are presented in unexpected ways. These moments of 'defamiliarization' in turn demand of the reader to engage with the poem(s) and poetic forms (as the lyric) within its pages not as irrevocable declaration, but as objects of play.

⁴⁹⁶ See note 48.

⁴⁹⁷ I use the term here as used (and arguably coined) by Russian literary critic Viktor Shklovsky in his 1917 essay 'Art as Device'.



[fig. 4]

Part 10 of *Ode IV* (shown on the right hand side of the page), is a meditation on age and youth. Beyond what is communicated in the words' semantics, and the poem's visual cues as just discussed, it is the aural procedures which give the most potent insights into human emotion. The 'sh' of the blood's harsh rush (lines 7 and 8) communicates at once a clandestine heartbreak (was the narrator wronged by the youth?) and ruminations of old age (is the young man only a reflection of the now-old man?). The emotive expression here relies on the tempo rather than on the didactic properties of language. Sentiments are not declared as in a narrative, but evoked by the poem's syntax, such as in the solitary placement of 'quickly' in the sixth line. The adverb may be describing the line before it, or the line after; in either case, the prominence of this word alarms us to the reality of the rapidity of youth's passing. No exposition is needed: the single word, placed as it is in the poem, is effective in communicating the non-verbal apprehension of encroaching death which often catches us unawares. Theodor Adorno, in praising Goethe's lyric poem 'Wanderers Nachtlied', comments that

[T]he greatness of the [...] poem derives from the fact that it does not speak about what is alienated and disturbing, from the fact that within the poem the restlessness of the object is not opposed to the subject; instead, the subject's own restlessness echoes it. A second immediacy is promised: what is human, language itself, seems to become creation again, while everything external dies away in the echo of the soul.⁴⁹⁸

Finlay's letter to Turnbull on 5 September 1961, in which he offers critique on Turnbull's poems, is helpful in underlining what for him was the significance of concise syntax over verbose diction: 'My own feeling would be that you should set out less, I mean say less, and learn more to emerge [...] I feel you tend to use the didactic level too much, like, if you could use more making and less saying.' Alec Finlay suggests that Finlay in his early poetry used the lyric form 'in their deliberate 'weeness' as one way to oppose the 'epic bombast of [Hugh] MacDiarmid.'⁴⁹⁹ Susan Smith similarly notes that 'Weeness is a conscious pose on Finlay's part; the diminutive appears constantly as a rhetorical form in Finlay's work.'⁵⁰⁰

Published in issue 4, Lorine Niedecker's poem 'Florida' is also revelatory of the playfulness of the lyric form. Unlike Johnson's and Picking's interpretation of Horace's Ode, however, the possibility for playful activity does not originate from the poem's aberration from the 'original'. Niedecker's poem may be wholly contemporary in material, but it nevertheless follows the lyric's parameters of brevity and emotiveness. The poem's invitation for engagement, I will suggest, comes predominately from its non-grammatical, expressionistic syntax, which alerts us to the construction of a purely poetic world. Here is the poem in its entirety:

⁴⁹⁸ Theodor W. Adorno, 'On Lyric Poetry and Society', *Notes to Literature, Volume 1* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 37-54 (p. 41).

⁴⁹⁹ A. Finlay, 'Introduction', p. 97.

⁵⁰⁰ Susan Smith, quoted in Molly Schwartzburg, 'Reading Finlay's Booklet Poems', in *The Present Order: Writings on the Work of Ian Hamilton Finlay* (Marfa: Marfa Book Company, 2010), pp. 109-154 (p. 136).

Florida

1

Always north of him

I see

He's close

to orange, flower

roseate bird

soft air

the state

I'm in

2

Flocks

of headkerchiefs

the plumed flamingo

gone

the vanity of women

slacked⁵⁰¹

Similar to the 'Semi-Idiotic Poem' examined earlier in the chapter, the poem is presented to the reader as an assemblage of phrases whose 'sense' (chronology, causality, etc.) must be constructed by the reader. Linear narration is absent; the 'meaning' of the lyrical fragments can only be activated by the reader's syntactical linking of the words to other words. Who is, for example, the 'him'

⁵⁰¹ Lorine Niedecker, 'Florida', *POTH* 4, p. 4.

evoked in the first stanza? Is there a relationship between this subject and ‘he’ of the second stanza? The words ‘orange’, ‘flower’, ‘roseate bird’ and ‘soft air’, separated by commas and by line breaks, can allude to separate sensory worlds, but there is the equal possibility of linking these word-worlds together. Oranges can perhaps scent the air ‘softly’ in a synesthetic move and the pink plumage of the bird (‘roseate’) may find likeness to a flower. The constellation of words is activated into narrative shape by the rhythm prompted by the poem’s prosody. The hard stresses on the words ‘gone’ and ‘slacked’ links the flamingo with the women: the theme of the loss of youth (as in the example of Horace’s *Odes*) is communicated as much by diction as by the deliberate placement of the words within the space of the page. The segmentation of the poem in two parts further contribute to the overarching sensation of loss: the delicate beauty and sense of yearning (‘He’s close/ to orange, flower’) evoked in the first part is formally contrasted to the image of the withering women parading their vanity in artificial plumage of headkerchiefs in their state of humidity (geographic and conditional).

Playful Avant-garde Precedents

As mentioned previously, the playful experiments of *POTH* can be conceptualised as interplay with tradition. The lyric poem is shown to contain latent possibilities for reader engagement with its ancient links to musicality; furthermore, the brevity of its form necessarily compresses language into precise and powerful images. Concrete poetry, too, as indicated by the Noigandres pilot plan, is contextualized within older poetic traditions. Concrete poetry’s historical lineage, however, is not ancient, but relatively recent, first finding expression in the avant-garde and modernist practises of the 19th century. As mentioned earlier, *POTH* invites us to draw links between lyric poetry and concrete poetry, as well as their connection to playful activity. In this section, I will look more closely at the avant-garde ‘genealogical’ strain in *POTH*, focussing specifically on typographical experiments within the pages of the little magazine. First I will briefly examine the link between *POTH* and aspects of the works of the Russian avant-gardes of the early 20th century. Next, taking into account the Russian Futurists’ discussion of typography, I will consider the effect of the typographical experiments in two issues of *POTH*.

The eighth issue is in many ways a direct homage to the work of the Russian avant-gardes.⁵⁰² The masthead announces that the issue is ‘in honour of’, among others, Natalia Goncharova, Kasimir Malevich, and Vladimir Tatlin, all of whom appear as the subjects of concrete poems by contemporary poets in the issue. Poems by Yury Pankratov, Andrei Voznesensky, A. Khlebnikov, and A. Tvardovskii are included, translated variously by Edwin Morgan, J. F. Hendry, and Anselm Hollo. Vladimir Mayakovsky’s line drawings, cartoonish in style, appear throughout the issue and give comic commentary to the poems as well as to the issue as a whole. The homages, line drawings, and translations weave together past and present works and draw affiliative links between *POTH* and the works of the Russian avant-gardes, politically (in the rejection of conservative art forms) and aesthetically.⁵⁰³ A reproduction of a page from El Lissitzky’s ‘Layout for Mayakovsky’ [fig. 5] highlights Russian avant-garde interest in the spatial arrangement of letters on the page, as well as the manipulation of the letters’ appearance. *POTH* does not recreate the red and black colours used in the original, but the experiment is still apparent in the variety of fonts used and in the diagonal slant of the top line. Although there is no substantial evidence to suggest that typographical experiments in *POTH* were motivated directly by the Russian avant-garde example, Russian futurist manifestos in particular concerning the significance of letters’ appearance are helpful in contextualizing the visuality of words as a significant aspect of *POTH*’s experiment.

⁵⁰² Marjorie Perloff suggests that Finlay’s interest in the Russian avant-gardes was likely inspired by Edwin Morgan. (Perloff, p. 102) Morgan’s translations of 6 Russian poets, *Sovpoems*, was published by Gael Turnbull’s Migrant Press in 1961.

⁵⁰³ This tactic of affiliating older art movements with contemporary work to allude to aesthetic or even political ambitions is not new. One historical example, as Matthew Potolsky posits in his essay ‘The Decadent Counterpublic’, are the decadent writers of the late 19th century, who often drew from a restricted list of trans-atlantic writers in order to ‘activate a network of cosmopolitan references’. In doing so, Potolsky suggests, they were not only elevating their own aesthetic status, but more importantly, solidifying their solidarity as writers united by artistic taste as well as by their opposition to modern commercial society. Matthew Potolsky, ‘The Decadent Counterpublic.’ *Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net* No. 48 (November 2007) <http://id.erudit.org/iderudit/017444ar>, p. 4.



Layout for Mayakovsky—El Lissitzky

[fig. 5]

In the Futurist manifesto “The Letter as Such” (1913) Velimir Khlebnikov and Aleksey Kruchenykh proclaim that the proliferation of printed text is indicative of cultural insipidity and political oppression. They write:

Why would they clothe [letters] in a gray prisoner’s uniform? You have seen the letters in their words – lined up in a row, humiliated, with cropped hair, and all equally colourless, gray – these are not letters, these are brands! But ask any wordwright and he will tell you that a word written in individual longhand or composed with a particular typeface bears no resemblance at all to the same word in a different inscription. After all, you would not dress all your young beauties in the same government coats!⁵⁰⁴

The manifesto demands that more attention is paid to the appearance of letters constituting the word. Khlebnikov and Kruchenykh claim that the uniformity of the letters’ presentation – presumably in literature as well as in day-to-day forms of communication – has contributed to a branding effect. It is likely that in comparing the letters to prisoners, they are drawing a parallel between the

⁵⁰⁴ V. Khlebnikov and A. Kruchenykh, ‘The Letter as Such’, reprinted in *Words in Revolution: Russian Futurist Manifestoes 1912-1928*, ed. by Anna Lawton and Herbert Eagle (Washington, D.C.: New Academia Publishing, 2004), pp. 63-64 (p. 63).

undermined potential of the letters' expression and their own position as artists within an increasingly authoritarian Russian state. Khlebnikov's and Kruchenykh's vision for idiosyncratic lettering is, I believe, an extension of their faith in the artistic vision. They write: 'Longhand peculiarly modified by one's mood conveys that mood to the reader, independently of the words [...] A piece may be rewritten in longhand by someone else or by the creator himself, but if he does not relive the original experience, the piece will lose all the charm acquired by means of free handwriting during 'the wild snowstorm of inspiration.'⁵⁰⁵ Although what is meant by 'the original experience' is not elaborated upon, the manifesto nevertheless asserts the upmost significance of the letters' appearance in communicating a particular mood of a piece. Khlebnikov and Kruchenykh concede that the 'illustrator' of the letters need not be the original writer: 'Of course, it is not mandatory that the wordwright be also the copyist of a handwritten book: indeed, it would be better if the wordwright entrusted this job to an artist.'⁵⁰⁶ What is necessary, however, is that the copyist is attuned to the 'original experience', or a particular mood in which the text was written.

The Russian avant-garde's interest in the text-illustration unity of medieval illuminated manuscripts is demonstrated in their idealistic notion of the copyist 'reliving original experience', that is, the intensive labour of monk-scribes in producing religious manuscripts.⁵⁰⁷ The importance of idiosyncratic lettering in a cultural atmosphere hostile to individuality is evoked in another Futurist manifesto, Nikolai Burliuk's 'Poetic Principles': 'In the past the life of letters was better understood [...] Take the manuscripts of the 14th and 15th centuries. With what love not only the illuminations, but also the letters are embellished and strengthened in these books.'⁵⁰⁸ In Burliuk's equation, phonetic script and the printed letter are conspirators – the uniformity of the printed letter, though maximizing legibility, robs the word of its intended character and also deprives the word-writer from the physical (and thus spiritual) experience of

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. 63-64.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 64.

⁵⁰⁷ 'Russian avant-garde books in the British Library', Introductory statement on British Library website, <http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelplang/russian/russianavantgardebooksinthebritishlibrary/russianavantgarde.html>

⁵⁰⁸ Nikolai Burliuk, 'Poetic Principles', reprinted in *Words in Revolution: Russian Futurist Manifestoes 1912-1928*, ed. by Anna Lawton and Herbert Eagle (Washington, D.C.: New Academia Publishing, 2004), pp. 82-84 (p. 83).

bringing that word into existence. Walter Ong's statement that 'Writing moves words from the sound world to a world of visual space, but print locks words into position in this space'⁵⁰⁹ offers a similar account of the relationship of writing and print. Print lends the word the appearance of invariability, and obscures the fact of the word's essential connection to the human mind which produced (or uttered) it.

In issue 11, from which we have already seen an example [fig. 4], John Picking has rendered the poems in longhand: the letters' curves and loops, as well as their diagonal angles, echo the illustrative style of the trees, water formations, and hills decorating the pages. Yves Abrioux, in discussing Finlay's visual word play in his concrete works, refers to the 'aura of a word' (himself quoting Walter Benjamin) evoked by the particular way in which the words are rendered. 'An involuted network of correspondences' is conjured by the words' depiction, writes Abrioux, such as the aura of 'sacred and aesthetic epiphany' suggested by the expressive calligraphy and use of neon lighting in the piece *L'etoile* (1976).⁵¹⁰ Similarly in issue 11, Picking's cursive writing, irregular and at times difficult to decipher, lends the poems an intimate and impulsive mood, fitting perhaps to the lyrical longing evoked in many of the pieces in the issue. In contrast to the immovability of machine-made print, the longhand depiction of the words gives an overall impression of impermanence, as if the letters could be erased and scratched out, constituting perhaps a sketch for a later, more professional product. In fact, one drawing, situated in the middle of the first page, appears to be a blueprint for a garden, complete with geometric calculations. Poems in translation, which make up more than half the issue, further demonstrate the transformative nature of poetry-making. Apollinaire's *Bestiary*, for example, has in effect undergone multiple conversions.⁵¹¹ The ancient Greek compendium of animals – which found popularity in the 12th century via illuminated manuscripts – has been reworked by Apollinaire, which has been excerpted and translated by Edwin Morgan and then illustrated by Picking. In a sense, Picking's visual interpretation of Apollinaire's work casts him as the

⁵⁰⁹ Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London and New York: Methuen, 1982), p. 121.

⁵¹⁰ Abrioux, p. 146.

⁵¹¹ The inclusion of Apollinaire, especially in light of his calligrammes, further points to *POTH's* avant-garde genealogy as well as to the magazine's experiment in typeface and arrangement of letters on the page.

contemporary scribe of a manuscript, much in the way the Russian futurists envisaged the copyist evoking the original mood of the writer. The use of handwriting here is therefore indicative of an editorial practice which encourages playful engagement with poems, and a measure against the officialising of text. As Solt writes, in regard to concrete poetry, 'What is required is a typographical artist with the sensitivity to interpret the poems and the integrity not to attempt to re-write the text or to take off from it and start adding things the poet didn't put there. This is not to say the typographical artist may not be able to discover possibilities in the text the poet has not discovered himself.'⁵¹²

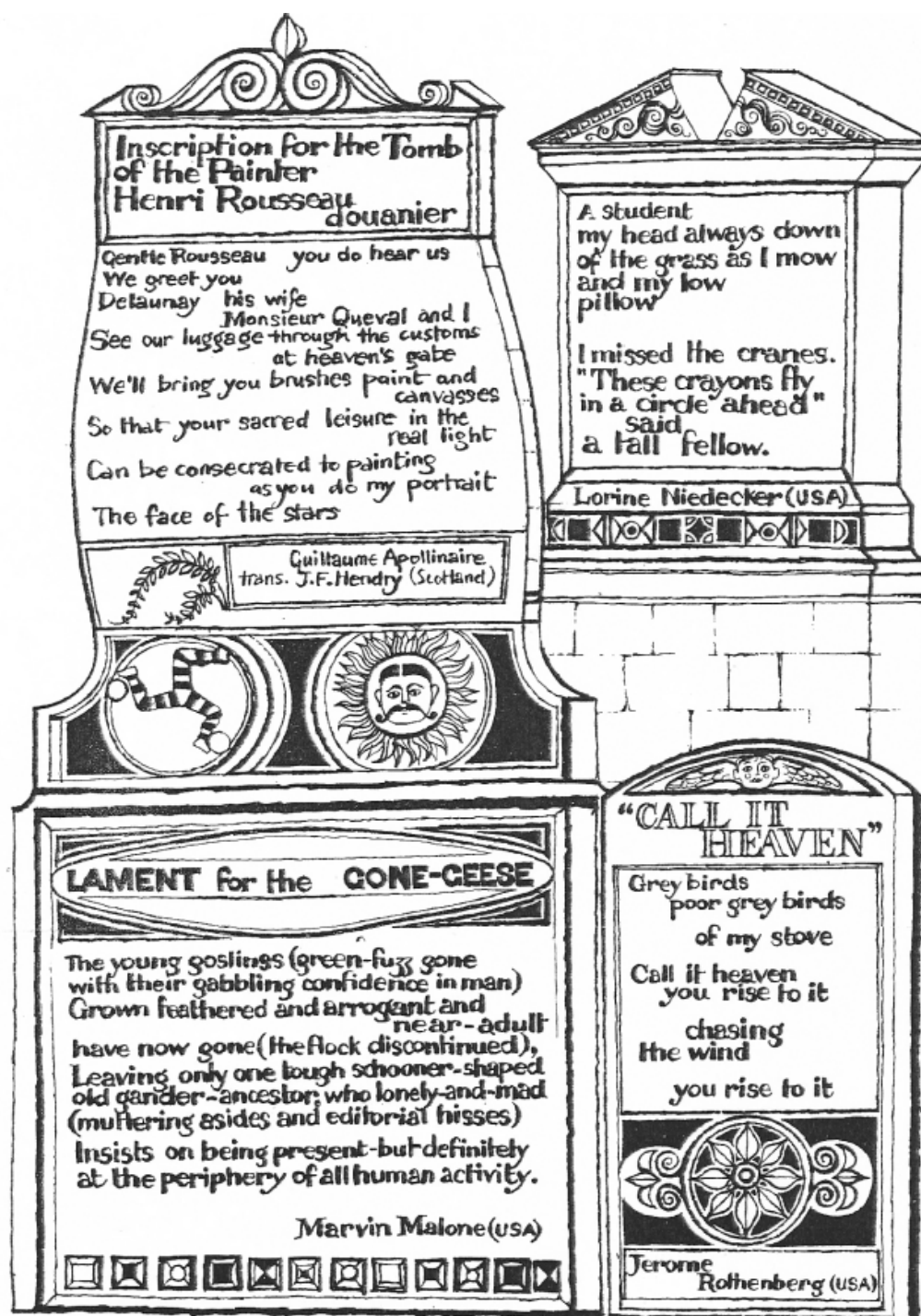
Khlebnikov and Kruchenykh in their manifesto place equal emphasis on 'graphic signs, visual signs, or simply tactile signs' as they do on the particular rendering of letters in evoking the 'mood' of a piece.⁵¹³ *POTH* often alerts the reader to the fact there is no apparent distinction between text and art. In issue 11, the illustrations of trees do not only decorate the page but are in effect the pieces' frames. Apollinaire's poem 'Rabbit', for example ('Its warren's low among the thyme/ In the sweet country of So'), has been illustrated as 'inhabiting' a warren underneath a grove of trees; on another page, the trees form a 'bubble' in which the poems are placed. Issue 13 offers an even more compelling suggestion of the ways in which text-image manipulation affects reading strategies. Here John Furnival's landscape of a seaside town unfolds within the issue. On one page, four poems [fig. 6] are illustrated as inscriptions upon tombstones. The frame of the tombstones and the 'carved' appearance of Furnival's handwriting operate in tandem to invest the poems with a mood of stately melancholia. Still other poems, rendered this time in print, are placed within illustrations of picture frames [fig. 7], as if hung in a gallery. Burliuk writes, in prescribing the careful consideration of the word's visual presentation in producing meaning, 'The word is able to convey an object only insofar as it represents at least part of the object's qualities.'⁵¹⁴ In *POTH*, it is at the reader's discretion the extent to which the visual and textual cues are taken for granted in perceiving a poem. In issue 13 at least, which sees Furnival taking great liberties with the contextualization of the

⁵¹² Solt, p. 64. For a more detailed discussion of the role of typography in concrete poetry, see the section under 'Typography in the Visual Poem' in Solt's introductory remarks in *Concrete Poetry: A World View*.

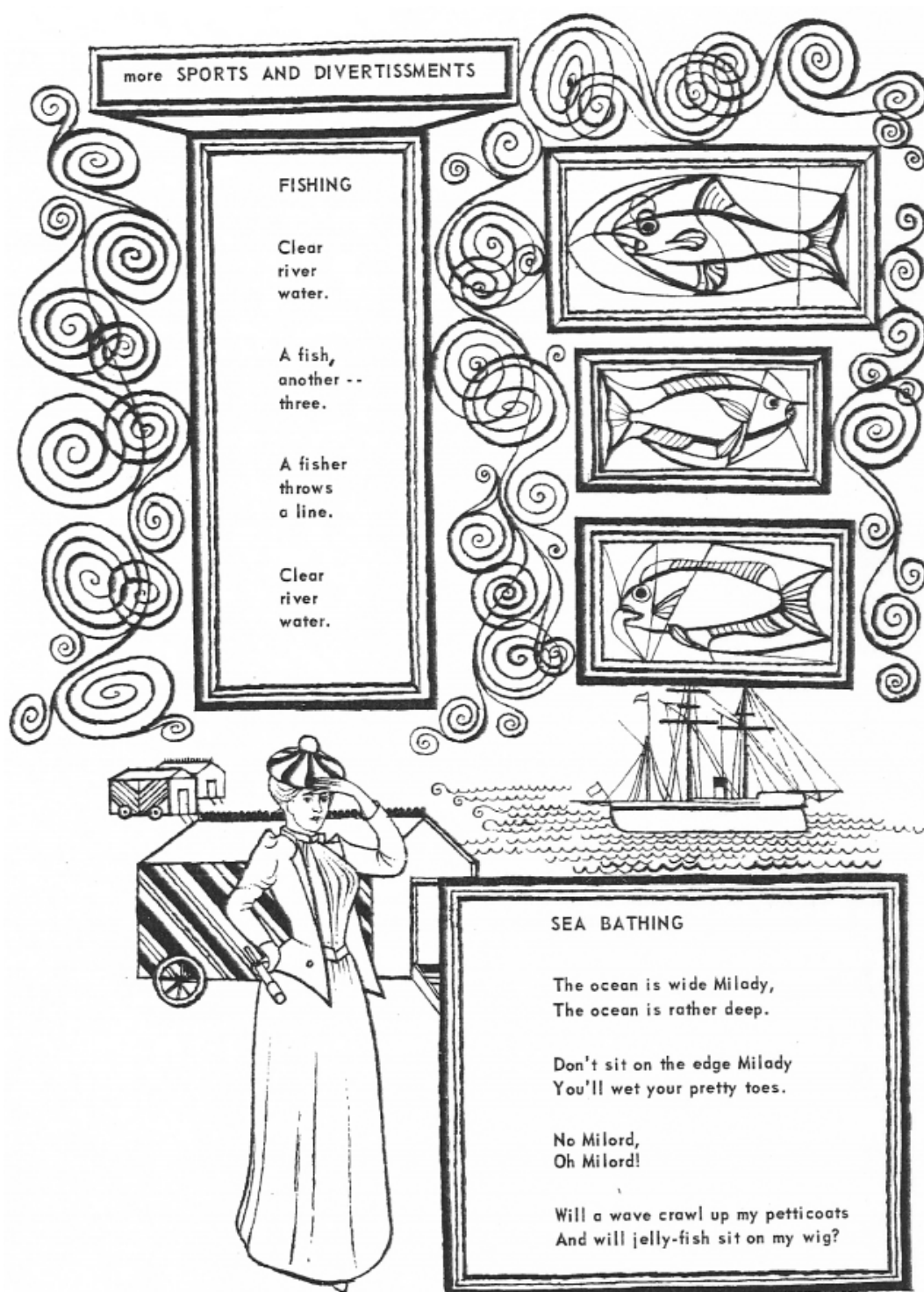
⁵¹³ Khlebnikov and Kruchenykh, p. 63.

⁵¹⁴ Burliuk, p. 82.

poems, the Russian Futurists' faith in the synchronicity of the experiences of the wordwright and the original writer is cast into doubt.



[fig. 6]



[fig. 7]

+ + +

David Bennett writes that the experience of reading a magazine ‘is an activity of selection and omission which produces the text as a (spatial) collage or (temporal) montage of fragments in provisional or indeterminate relations. The experience of periodical reading is an experience of discontinuity.’⁵¹⁵ The rendering of an entire issue by one artist in *POTH*, with the uses of handwriting and the framing device of the illustrations, counters Bennett’s claim. Furnival’s illustrations in issue 13 cohere the separate pieces into a visual theme of homes and seaside, and suggest a strategy of perceiving the poems as rooted to a central idea or design, rather than as solitary fragments. The visual element ensures that the arrangement of the poems is not merely a ‘montage of fragments’, but rather, a purposefully arranged and curated collection, as pieces of art are arranged within a gallery exhibition. As with the *Kunstkammer*, the Renaissance period cabinet of curiosities wherein various objects were collected under the organising principle of the collector, the reader is encouraged to perceive the various poems as elements of a whole. In other numbers, such as issue 22, an excerpt from Charles Biederman’s essay ‘An Art Credo’, reproduced by typographer Philip Steadman, constitutes the entire issue. The very idea of a periodical as miscellany is thereby rejected; we can entertain the idea that here Finlay is playing the language game of ‘magazine.’

We may therefore pose the question: What constitutes the concept of a magazine? Is it the idea of miscellany, consistency, or both? We may use the word ‘magazine’ to indicate an idea we have about a kind of publication, but when we try to identify universal characteristics, we are at a loss: we can only come to a loose and generalized definition. The analogy drawn in this chapter between *POTH* and play have aimed to show how the inclusion of particular ‘kinds’ of poems (such as sound poetry and visual poetry), the grouping together of poems within a specific issue, and the design and formatting of these works, highlight Finlay’s policy of experimentation within but also *with* the little magazine. In comparing *POTH*’s editorial practice to Wittgenstein’s discussion of language-games, two aspects of the magazine have been examined: the

⁵¹⁵ David Bennett, ‘Periodical Fragments and Organic Culture’, *Contemporary Literature* 30 no. 4 (Winter 1989), 480-502 (p. 480).

diversity of its poetries and the resistance they exercise against the consolidation of any one set of 'reading rules' becoming the exemplary way of reading a poem. The inclusion of concrete and lyrical poetry in *POTH* have been explored as examples of playful acts; the 'rules' regulating these poetic traditions, far from creating monumental and rigid pronouncements, encourage the reader to interact with them as objects of use. Finally, various experiments in spatial arrangement and typeface of letters, in the spirit of the Russian avant-gardes, offer suggestions for fresh ways of reading, wherein words do not merely represent meaning but connote auras and moods. The 25 issues of *POTH*, and the poems printed in them, perhaps aspire to Plato's ideal literature: the magazine, as a crafted object, leaves itself open to inquiry and play.

Conclusion: Little magazines: ‘Re-tuning of the Receptive Organs’

The tangible, haptic, hyper-visual nature of the little magazine and small press (at their best) is a significant part of the story [...] For traditionalists, the aesthetics of the late modernism of the sixties and seventies small press may take some re-tuning of the receptive organs, but there are many pleasures to be had in the world of the avant-garde (not just puritanical lessons) – Richard Price⁵¹⁶

Bourdieu’s conceptualisation of literary production as a system of competing beliefs is a useful framework for exploring little magazines, particularly because their ‘little-ness’ already infers their political identity. Set against ‘big’ magazines, the little magazine has become emblematic of 1960s counter-culture, evoking associations of defiant literary cottage industries set against the organs of conventional taste. Jeff Nuttall for instance declares little magazine publishing as the distinguishing activity of the ‘Underground’ in his book *Bomb Culture*. The little magazine’s categorical ‘unconventionality’, however, has also garnered criticism. Andrew Duncan writes that

There was a touch of the laying on of hands about avant-garde poetry at that time, due I think to the extreme scarcity of books and information; if you decide that the official books are talking death, you try to find the True Tradition vested in living people, they become gurus until their lesson has been imparted, and many misrecognitions can occur. Some people decided *they* were gurus, and this caused damage. This near-Gnostic True Tradition fantasy inspired the whole small press world of the sixties and seventies.⁵¹⁷

As Duncan suggests, little magazines of the 1960s were – and are today – objects of romanticization, often construed by fashionable audiences as missives from utopian collectives (which were in fact illusory). Certainly the bombastic manner of literary manifestoes of the period, not excluding Olson’s ‘Projective Verse’, did much to promote the reputation of what Duncan refers to as the ‘near-gnosticism’ of little magazines and their contributors. Varying from inky mimeographed reproductions, painstakingly crafted artists’ books to even

⁵¹⁶ Richard Price, ‘Tactile’, *PS 6* [Prose supplement to *Painted, Spoken*] (2009), p. 2.

⁵¹⁷ Andrew Duncan, ‘Such that commonly each: A *Various Art* and the Cambridge Leisure Centre’, *Jacket 20* (December 2002), <http://jacketmagazine.com/20/dunc-camb.html>

cakes,⁵¹⁸ little magazines were always in danger of being made into cultural relics even at the point of their conception.

My investigation of *Migrant* and *POTH* has aimed to demonstrate that considering the little magazine as textual object discloses only a part of their social and historical significance. Bourdieu's framework for cultural analysis situates the work of art as a node at which the efforts of the participants of the field of production are concentrated; in this formulation, the little magazine may be approached as a literary artefact as well as the documentation of networks of literary hierarchies, antagonisms, and perhaps most illuminatingly, friendships. Little magazines often complicate the picture of literary alliances and adversaries by demonstrating that party lines were not so solidly drawn, and that influences often came from a variety of sources. Wolfgang Görtzschacher notes that 'Often [little] magazines offer the only flexible forum for rounding out the black against the white, giving the present a more sober view of the past after the partisans have begun to grow old'.⁵¹⁹ Turnbull's and Finlay's influences were eclectic and wide-ranging; this is reflected in their publication of various literary traditions next to one another in their magazines, avant-garde or not. The new direction in British poetry which *Migrant* and *POTH* helped to inspire in the 1960s was therefore motivated not so much by wholesale rejection of conventional literature, but by a keen sense of curiosity vis-à-vis diverse poetic currents.

The publication of poetry from abroad in *Migrant* and *POTH* were vital contributions to the British literary scene. Casanova's depiction of international literary exchange as procedures of complex negotiations – rather than as a straightforward trafficking of ideas – helps us to contextualize Turnbull's and Finlay's encounter with 'foreign texts' beyond their publishing of them. Instead, we may understand their engagement as a process by which they positioned themselves within the context of British literature and the wider global literary

⁵¹⁸ In 1968 Allen Fisher began *Edible Magazine*. He describes it as thus: 'I started printing my work [...] using shortcakes, with cut inscriptions and sugar icing, with occasional poisonous editions which included printing ink on paper. This developed into the building of a gelatine press and a world-war-two air-force technique, which printed onto rice paper using cochineal food colouring. I added short cake covers and poisonous supplements.' Allen Fisher, 'Between Text and Product', *PS* 6 [Prose supplement to *Painted, Spoken*] (2009), 3-12 (p.3).

⁵¹⁹ Wolfgang Görtzschacher, 'Little Magazines and Literary History', in *Poetry Now: Contemporary British and Irish Poetry in the Making*, ed. by Holger Klein, Sabine Coelsch-Foisner, and Wolfgang Görtzschacher (Tubingen: Stauffenberg-Verlag (1999), pp. 343-353 (p. 344).

field. Finlay and Turnbull acknowledged literary nationalism as a major obstacle to innovative writing; at the same time, they considered themselves to be Scottish and/or British poets and approached international examples as models rather than as materials for direct imitation. In this way, *Migrant* and *POTH* may teach us lessons in encountering poetry from abroad. As Keith Tuma writes,

It is not enough for us [...] to know what is going on in this or that work, or from where it might or might not derive: we must also know what the work is likely to confront as it makes its way in its local worlds. [We must also] be attentive not only to the specificities of the work but also to its reception as that occurs in and changes across various locales.⁵²⁰

As much as *Migrant* and *POTH* are perceptive and nuanced in their disclosure of experimental poetics, it must also be noted that the literary worlds within which the magazines circulated, and which they in turn reflected, were far from egalitarian. Ken Edwards's observation that the little magazine and small press were 'tight social networks [which were] overwhelmingly male-dominated and still almost entirely white'⁵²¹ ought to be considered even when appraising the pioneering efforts of little magazines of this period. The pages of *Migrant* and *POTH* largely affirm Edwards's assessment of publishing predominantly poetry by white men; Miller's and Price's survey of little magazines in the period between 1960-1975 suggests that it was not until the 1970s that little magazines which self-consciously promoted women's literature, for instance, began to emerge in earnest.⁵²² The idea of a 'tight social network' which little magazines helped to promote is not necessarily a negative phenomenon, however. Friendships initiated and maintained via little magazines were crucial in fostering creative practise, as well as widening distribution circles and creating opportunities of dialogue about literary works. Finlay's and Turnbull's friendship is a notable example of how private networks can sow the seeds of change in the

⁵²⁰ Keith Tuma, 'Slobbering Distance: American, British, and Irish Exploratory Poetics in a Global Era', in *Assembling Alternatives: Reading Postmodern Poetics Transnationally*, ed. by Romana Huk (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2003), pp. 143-155 (p. 151).

⁵²¹ Ken Edwards, 'Two Poetics', *Angelaki Journal of Theoretical Humanities* Vol. 5 no. 1 (April 2000), 25-37 (p. 27).

⁵²² David Miller and Richard Price, *British Poetry Magazines 1914-2000: A History and Biography of 'Little Magazines.'* (London: British Library, 2006), p. 123. Such magazines included *Gallery* (1974-1978), *Savacou* (1970-1979), and *Women's Liberation Review* (1972-).

literary landscape. Turnbull's keen observation about Finlay, which he made upon their first meeting in 1963, may be applied to himself:

I have the sense of a long and very thin wedge, the tip of which he has inserted under some edifice called *Poetry in Scotland* and every word is another tap on that wedge, which he is driving home, slowly but irresistibly. So that one can feel the whole country tremble slightly, every so often, hardly realising what is happening to it.⁵²³

⁵²³ Gael Turnbull, *More Words: Gael Turnbull on Poets & Poetry*, ed. by Jill Turnbull and Hamish Whyte (Bristol: Shearsman Books, 2012), p. 160.

Appendix: *Migrant and Poor.Old.Tired.Horse.* contributors

Migrant (1959-1960)

Issue 1 (July 1959)

Pierre Delattre
Thomas Lundin (Gael Turnbull)
Ed Dorn
Michael Shayer

Issue 2 (September 1959)

Robert Creeley
Wanda Donlin
Raymond Souster
Merle Moyleman
Cid Corman
Michael Shayer
Robert Duncan

Issue 3 (November 1959)

Jay Macpherson
Robert Creeley
Michael Shayer
Denise Levertov
Larry Eigner
Michael Butler
Godfrey John
Thomas Lundin
Ed Dorn

Issue 4 (January 1960)

Charles Tomlinson
Barriss Mills
Hugh Creighton Hill
Helmut Bonheim

Issue 5 (March 1960)

Roy Fisher
Denise Levertov
Edwin Morgan
John Preston
Robert Creeley
Cid Corman

Otto Schmink

Issue 6 (May 1960)

Mitchell Goodman
Jeanne-Ruth Hammer
Larry Eigner
John Preston
Reed Whittemore
Alan Brownjohn
Michael Butler
Michael Shayer

Issue 7 (July 1960)

John Besteman
Hugh Kenner
Ian Hamilton Finlay
George Johnston
Peter Foote
Raymond Federman
Max Chamberlin
Matthew Mead

Issue 8 (September 1960)

Edwin Morgan
Charles Olson
Milton Acorn
Anselm Hollo
Michael Shayer
Larry Eigner
Barriss Mills
W. Price Turner
Louis Dudek
Marion Milner
Ian Hamilton Finlay
Godfrey John
Robert Duncan
Raymond Federman
Helmut Bonheim
Robert Duncan
Roy Fisher

*Poor.Old.Tired.Horse. (1962-1967)*Issue 1

Pete Brown
 Anselm Hollo
 Ian Hamilton Finlay
 Tatsuji Miyoshi
 Lorine Niedecker
 Alan Riddell
 Gael Turnbull
 Edwin Morgan

Issue 2

Tuomas Anhava
 Dave Ball
 George Mackay Brown
 Cid Corman
 Attila Jozsef
 Shimpei Kusano
 Lesley Lendrum
 Vladimir Mayakovsky
 Jerome Rothenberg
 Gerry A. Zdanwicz

Issue 3

Guillaume Apollinaire
 R. Crombie Saunders
 Larry Eigner
 Lawrence Ferlinghetti
 Robert Garioch
 Libby Houston
 Giacomo Leopardi
 Edwin Morgan
 Cesar Lopez Nunez
 Veng
 Jonathan Williams

Issue 4

Helen B. Cruickshank
 Spike Hawkins
 J.F. Hendry
 Bernard Kops
 Suzan Livingstone
 Tom McGrath

Alexander McNeish
 Heinrich von Morungen
 Lorine Niedecker
 George Trakl

Issue 5

Hans Arp
 Pete Brown
 Tao Ch'ien
 e.e. cummings
 Theodore Enslin
 Robert Garioch
 Pekka Lounela
 William McGonagall
 Alexander McNeish
 Marvin Malone
 Pablo Neruda
 Vasko Popa
 Alan Riddell
 Armand Schwerner
 Andrei Voznesensky

Issue 6

Augusto de Campos
 Larry Eigner
 Guenter Grass
 Spike Hawkins
 J.F. Hendry
 Attila Jozsef
 Bernard Kops
 Marcelo Moura
 Michael Shayer
 Mary Ellen Solt
 Pedro Xisto
 Louis Zukofsky

Issue 7

Paul Blackburn
 Paul Celan
 Robert Creeley
 Piero Heliczer
 Richard Huelsenbeck
 Hamish McLaren

Alexander McNeish
 Bud Neill
 R. Crombie Saunders
 Kurt Schwitters
 Robert Simmons
 Mario Trufelli
 Andrei Voznesensky

Issue 8

Spike Hawkins
 Ian Hamilton Finlay
 A. Khlebnikov
 Velemir Khlebnikov
 El Lissitzky
 Vladimir Mayakovsky
 Yury Pankratov
 Mary Ellen Solt
 Peter Stitt
 Alexander Tvardovskii
 Andrei Voznesensky
 Jonathan Williams

Issue 9

Paul Fort
 John Gray
 Libby Houston
 Ronald Johnson
 Paulo Marcos de Andrade
 Lorine Niedecker
 Rocco Scotellaro
 Peter Stitt

Issue 10

Augusto de Campos
 Ian Hamilton Finlay
 Robert Frame
 Eugen Gomringer
 Anselm Hollo
 Dom Sylvester Houedard
 Robert Lax
 Edwin Morgan

Issue 11

Guillaume Apollinaire
 J.F. Hendry
 Horace
 Renzo Laurano

Ann McGarrell
 Christian Morgenstern
 John Picking
 Michael Shayer
 Kurt Siegel
 Robert Simmons

Issue 12

Lewis Carroll
 Ian Hamilton Finlay
 J.F. Hendry
 Dom Sylvester Houedard
 Ernst Jandl
 Edwin Morgan
 Mary Ellen Solt
 Paul de Vree
 Jeffrey Steele

Issue 13

Guillaume Apollinaire
 Ian Hamilton Finlay
 Ronald Johnson
 Marvin Malone
 Lorine Niedecker
 Nicole Rabetaud
 Jerome Rotherbeg
 Mary Ellen Solt
 John Furnival

Issue 14

Pierre Albert-Birot
 Ian Hamilton Finlay
 John Furnival
 Heinz Gappmayr
 Mary Ellen Solt
 Pedro Xisto

Issue 15

R.L. Cook
 Theodore Enslin
 Ian Hamilton Finlay
 Libby Houston
 Hamish MacLaren
 George Mackay Brown
 Edwin Morgan
 Eli Siegel
 Margot Sandeman

Issue 16

Pierre Albert-Birot
 Barry Cole
 Ian Hamilton Finlay
 Spike Hawkins
 Hermann Hesse
 Ernst Jandl
 Francis Ponge
 Eli Siegel
 Tristan Tzara
 Enrique Uribe
 Jonathan Williams
 Edward Wright

Issue 17

Robert Lax
 Emil Antonucci

Issue 18

Bridget Riley
 Ad Reinhardt

Issue 19

Ronald Johnson
 John Furnival

Issue 20

Ian Hamilton Finlay
 Peter Lyle

Issue 21

Augusto de Campos
 Edgard Braga
 Nigel Sutton

Issue 22

Charles Biederman
 Philip Steadman

Issue 23

Pierre Albert-Birot

Theodore Enslin
 Ian Hamilton Finlay
 Ronald Johnson
 George Mackay Brown
 Edwin Morgan
 Eli Siegel
 Gael Turnbull
 Max Weber
 John Furnival

Issue 24

Graham Keen
 Stephen Bann
 Claus Bremer
 Kenelm Cox
 Ian Hamilton Finlay
 John Furnival
 Eugen Gomringer
 Hansjorg Mayer
 Edwin Morgan
 Alistair Cant

Issue 25

Alkman
 Oswald de Andrade
 Stephen Bann
 Hugh Creighton Hill
 Kenelm Cox
 Ian Hamilton Finlay
 Astrid Gillis
 Giles Gordon
 Edward Lucie-Smith
 Ernst Jandl
 George Mackay Brown
 Stuart Mills
 Alan Riddell
 Aram Saroyan
 Martin Seymour-Smith
 Dick Sheeler
 Eli Siegel
 Gael Turnbull
 Jonathan Williams
 Jerome Rothenberg
 Pedro Xisto
 Douglas Young
 Jim Nicholson

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